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## DROLL TALES: THE SECOND DECADE









HONORÉ DE BALZAC

# DROLL TALES

THE SECOND DECADE

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## PROLOGUE





SOME wights there be who have taxed the writer with knowing as little about the language of olden times as a hare knows about binding faggots. Time was when these fellows would have been dubbed—ay, and rightly too, I ween—cannibals, kill-joys, sycophants, and spawn of Gomorrha, or something very like it. But the Author, in his clemency, forbears to bedeck them with these fair flowers of old-time criticism. He contents himself with not wishing to be in their skin, for it would shame and make him blush to find himself therein; and he would account himself the lousiest of slanderers did he thus befoul a poor book that squares not with the taste of every scribbler of the times. Out on ye, black hearted knaves, that fling from your windows upon others a certain precious and most biliary liquid, ye were better bespattered yourselves withal.

The Author finds consolation for his failure to please ye, in calling to mind that a former son of Touraine, and one of eternal memory, had so much garbage flung at him by gentry of your cloth, that his patience gave out and, as he tells us in one of his prologues, he debated within himself concerning the matter, and was sorely tempted not to write another word. Times alter, but not manners. Nothing changes: neither God above nor man

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below. And so the Author thrusts in his spade with a merry heart, relying on the future to repay him for his weighty toil. For, certes, 'tis a heavy task to excogitate a Hundred Merrie Tales, sith, having stood the fire of knaves and envious ruffians, he is called on to put up with the strictures of his friends who come to him and cry "Are you mad? What are you thinking of? Never was yet a man in all the world, with a hundred such tales stored up in his top-knot. Rip off that vainglorious ticket from thy bags, good sir! You'd never get to the end of such a task!"

These folk be neither man-haters nor man-eaters. Ruffians they may be; I know not. But of a surety, they be right good friends, of the kind that don't stick at giving you the rough side of their tongue all your life long, harsh as curry-combs, on the pretext that they are yours, inside out and outside in, in all the trials of life, and only reveal their true worth when death has got you by the heels. And even so, it could be borne with, if these worthies would confine themselves to such lugubrious attentions. When their alarms are proved to have been groundless, they will exclaim triumphantly, "Ha! ha! I knew it all along! Didn't I tell you as much?"

But so as not to discourage the expression of noble sentiments, even when they are intolerable, the Author bequeaths unto his said friends his old, gaping slippers, and gives them this assurance for their comfort, that he has in his own right and wholly unencumbered, within the natural reservoir and convolutions of his cerebellum,



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seventy winsome tales. Gadzooks! but they be saucy yarns, clothed with dainty phrases, most richly furnished with matter peripatetic, generously bedecked with brand-new comicalities, abounding in day-tricks and night-tricks, and richly portraying that web which the human race has for ever been busily weaving, every minute, hour, week, month and year, that was included in the great ecclesiastical computation which began or ever the sun could see his hand before his face, and when the moon stood waiting for someone to shew her the way she had to go. These some seventy subjects, which he will suffer you to call knavish subjects, if you like, full of quips, and cranks, ribaldry, bawdiness, jesters, gamesters and rufflers, being added to the twice ten tales already hatched, are, by the Prophet's belly, a trifling instalment towards the aforesaid hundred. And had it not been a scurvy time for bibliopolists, bibliophiles, bibliomaniacs, bibliographers and bibliothecæ, a time to hamper the free indulgence of bibliophagy, he had given them all forth at a single swish and not drop by drop, as though he were afflicted with pain in the passing of his cerebral secretions.

But, by my codpiece, that is an infirmity which none need fear in him, seeing that oftentimes he hath given good, ay, generous weight to his customers, ramming many a story into one, as is clearly shown in several cases in this Decade. And know ye that he hath made choice, to wind up with, of the best and bawdiest among them, for he would by no means willingly be looked upon as a doddering and drivelling old slabberdegullion.

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So put more friendship into your hatreds and less hatred into your friendships.

Now, disregarding the grasping parsimony of Nature in the matter of story-tellers, of whom there are no more than seven perfect specimens in the wide ocean of human writings, there be some, friendly fellows too, who considered that at a time when everyone went about in black, as though in mourning for something he had lost, it were meet to concoct works tediously serious or seriously tedious; that a scribe could not live in these days unless he housed his thoughts in mighty edifices, and that whoso knew not the art of building Cathedrals and Castles, whereof the stones nor the cement ever budge a hair's-breadth, would die as nameless as the Pope's mules. And so these friends were called upon to declare which they would rather have, a pint of good wine or a ton of beer; a twenty-two carat diamond, or a hundred pounds of common rock; Rabelais' tale of Hans Carvel's ring or a new-fangled treatise lugubriously excreted by some sour visaged dryasdust.

And as they looked all dumbfounded and amazed, we said to them, without a trace of anger, "Do ye hear, good folk? Well then, back with you to your vineyards!"

But now it behoves us to add this fact, for the rest of the folk. The good man, to whom we owe these fables and tales of everlasting worth, hath put nought but his working-tool therein, for the materials he filched from others. But the workmanship expended by him on these figures hath invested them with a high value; and what though he were, like Master Loys Ariosto, vilipended

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for busying himself with fiddle-faddles and trifles, per-adventure a little insect carven by him being better assured of immortality than many a whole pompous edifice of solid and imposing masonry. And where the Gay-Sçavoir, the Lightsome Learning is in question, 'tis customary to esteem more highly a single page squeezed from the gizzard of Nature and of Truth, than all the tepid volumes wherefrom, for all their handsome bindings, you could never wring so much as a laugh or a tear. The Author hath licence to say all this without unseemliness, inasmuch as he seeks not to raise himself on tip-toe to give himself a supernatural stature, but because it is the majesty of his art that is in question and not his own dignity; he being but a poor scrivener whose only merit is to have plenty of ink in his inkhorn, to give an attentive ear to the gentlemen of the Court, and to take down the sayings of everyone in his report-book. He is merely there for the mechanical part of the business, Nature herself having care of the rest, seeing that beginning with the Venus of my lord Pheidias of Athens, right down to the worthy little Godenot, who passes by the name of the *Sieur Breloque*, curiously elaborated by one of the most celebrated authors of our day, everything is modelled on the everlasting mould of that humanity which is the common property of us all. In this honest calling, the thieves come off best. So far from being hanged, they are esteemed and made much of. But he were a threefold idiot, an idiot with ten horns to his head, who should boast, brag and preen himself concerning an advantage due to a mere accident of tem-

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perament, for glory merely resides in the cultivation of our faculties and in the patience and courage with which we address ourselves to our task.

And as to the little fluty tones and dainty little beaks who have come softly twittering in the Author's ear, complaining that they have trowsled their hair and soiled their kirtles in this place and that, his answer to them is "Why did you go there?" With regard to these things he is constrained, owing to the signal injustice of certain folk, to give notice to all persons of goodwill, adjuring them to stifle the slanders of the people aforesaid who spread abroad calumnies concerning him.

These "Droll Tales" were written, according to good authority, during the time when Queen Catherine de Medici walked the earth; a right worthy bit of royalty since she never meddled with public affairs without profiting our holy religion. Those were times when many a worthy was laid by the heels, from our late Master Francis, the first of his name, down to the Estates of Blois, where my lord of Guise bit the dust. Now, any student that disports himself at chuck farthing will tell you that in those times of excursions and alarms, the language of France suffered from the general unrest, owing to the idiosyncrasies of every poet who, then as now, was fain to make him a French for his own special use, not to mention outlandish words: Greek, Latin, Italian, German, Swiss, phrases imported from lands across the sea, Spanish jargon, and all manner of expressions brought thither by foreigners; so that your poor student of literature had plenty of scope for his work



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amid the babel which Masters de Balzac, Blaise Pascal, Furetière, Mesnage, Saint-Evremond, de Malsherbe, and others, had sore ado to remedy, for they were the first to give the French language a good sweeping, cried "avaunt!" to foreign importations, and gave right of citizenship only to words of sound lineage, honest usage and general acceptance; all of which made Master Ronsard look a little queer.

And now having said his say, the Author returns to the lady of his heart, and wishes countless joys to the friends who love him. To the rest, he proffers nuts and hopes they will stick in their gullets. As soon as the swallows fly home again, he will be back once more with his third and his fourth decades. And in this he swears to all Pantagruelists, wangdanglers, and saucy wights, and to all who loathe tristifications, meditations and melancholy lucubrations, that he will not fail.



# THE THREE CLERKS OF ST. NICHOLAS





IN DAYS of yore the hostelry of "The Three Barbels" at Tours was renowned, far and wide, for the excellence of its fare and the landlord thereof, who was voted a prince among chefs, frequently fared as far afield as Châtellerault, Loches, Vendôme and Blois, to make ready wedding feasts. I' faith, the old rascal was master of his craft, ne'er lighting a lamp till nightfall; a thoroughgoing skinflint, who took count of every hair, hide, and feather, and kept so sharp an eye on everything that 'twere vain to seek to bamboozle him, and had one handed him a farthing less than his due, sooth he would have demanded payment, e'en if the defaulter were a prince of the blood. Otherwise was he a merry wight, swilling like a tinker, and gesting with any scabby slabberdegullion, but always hat in hand in the presence of persons bearing plenary indulgence yclept "*sit nomen Domini benedictum*," urging them to spend freely and demonstrating with great eloquence when need was, that wines were costly, and do what one would, nought was given away in Touraine, all things must be bought and consequently paid for. In a word, could he have done so without shame, he would have made a charge for the fresh air and the view. Thus he contrived to keep himself in ease and luxury with other folks' money, grew

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pot-bellied and fat as a hog, and was addressed as "Monsieur."

It so happened, that to the last fair came three lusty young lobcocks; experienced students from the School of Knavery, in whom one might find more of the ingredients that go to the making of thieves than of saints; to wit, knowing just how far to go without running their necks into a noose, and determined to live well and enjoy themselves at the expense of rich merchants who came to the fair. These limbs of Satan bade farewell to the master with whom they had studied black magic in the town of Angers, and came forthwith to "The Three Barbels," where they turned everything arsy-versy, calling for the best apartments, declaring they had no appetites, yet ordering all the lampreys in the market, proclaiming themselves to be merchants of the first order, who travelled in person but bore no merchandise with them.

Mine host trotted hither and thither, turning spits, making ready everything of his best, and at last served a dinner, fit for a king, to these three cozening varlets who had, certes, made sufficient disturbance for an hundred crowns but had no intention of parting with even the twelve pennies which one of them jingled in his pouch. Still, though short of money, they lacked not ingenuity, and all three played their parts like mummers at a fair; for this was a play in which was much eating and drinking; and for five days they made such havoc among the provender that a party of hungry soldiers would have been hard put to it to beat them. After thus feasting, these three rogues made their way to the fair,





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gorged, pot-bellied and finely tricked out, and there played many a prank upon the silly clodpates, stealing, filching and sporting, taking down the various signs and inscriptions, and changing one with the other: putting that of the toymaker over the booth of the trinket-seller, and that of the trinket-seller over the shoemaker's; making havoc in the shops; setting the dogs at one another, cutting the tether-ropes of the horses, tossing cats among the crowds, crying "Stop thief," and saying to every man they met, "Are you not Master Shitbreech of Angers?" They jostled here and there, poking holes in the flour sacks, peeping into pockets of the wenches for their handkerchiefs, whisking up their petticoats as if in search of a lost bauble and crying, "Ladies, it must have fallen into some hole!"

They misdirected the little children, prodded stargazers in the paunch, caterwauling, rioting, and exasperating everyone. In good sooth, the devil would have seemed wisdom itself in comparison with these damned malaperts, who would rather swing than behave like honest men; sooner might one hope for mercy from two furious litigants. Albeit still unwearied but tired of their pranks, they left the fair and gorged themselves until night-fall, when they recommenced their deviltries by torchlight.

After the fair, they started on the town strumpets by a thousand tricks, giving only that which they received, following the axiom of Justinian "*Cuicum ius tribuere*"—"to each his own juice"; and after the business was accomplished, said:

"We are up and you are down!"



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After supper, having no likelier subject for their tricks, they started on each other, and to keep the ball rolling, complained of the flies to their host, declaring that other innkeepers had them caught so that persons of high degree might not be teased by them. Howbeit, on the fifth day, which is ever the critical day with fevers, the landlord, never having seen, albeit he had opened his eyes never so wide, so much as the royal outline of a crown piece upon his customers, and knowing well that if all that glistered were gold, then would it cost less, began to pucker his brows and to do the bidding of these exalted personages with leaden feet. Fearing lest he should have made a bad bargain, he endeavoured to sound the depths of their pockets; perceiving which, the three clerks, with all the assurance of a provost hanging his man, directed him to serve, with all speed, a magnificent supper, since the hour of their departure had come.

Their merry faces disarmed their host's suspicions. Certes, thought he, rascals without money would look more serious. So made he ready a supper worthy of a canon, hoping the while to see them so drunk, that should trouble arise, he could the more easily pack them into gaol.

Weening not how to contrive an escape from this room, where you may swear they were as easy as fish on a dung-heap, the three comrades swilled and stuffed themselves furiously, with an eye to the size of the case-ments, vainly seeking an opportunity to make themselves scarce.

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Cursing roundly, one of them thought he would go outside to loosen his pursestrings somewhat on account of pancreatic vapours, the other to fetch a leech to the third who was like to fall into a swoon.

The thrice-accursed host fiddle-faddled this way and that, brisk as a body louse, from bake-house to dining-room and from dining-room to bake-house, ever watchful of his gentry, with a step forward to save his due and two steps back lest these high born seigneurs should prove seigneurs in truth. So he comported himself like a right prudent host who loved halfpence better than kicks. Thus under pretence of rendering them good service, kept he one eye on the serving-room and one foot in the courtyard, pretending he thought himself called, and popping in his head—and at every burst of laughter, with a wry expression, which disappeared as he enquired, “My lords, what is your pleasure?” A question in answer to which they longed to give him ten inches of his own spit in the gullet, for in truth, he seemed to know that the only thing that could pleasure them, at this juncture, was twenty full-weight crowns for which gladly would they barter a third of their share of eternity. You may swear they sat as easy on their bench as ’twere a grill, with feet itching and arses somewhat warm. Already had mine host set the pears, cheese and conserves under their noses, but supping their wine with little sips and picking without appetite at the dishes, they looked at one another to see if any had found a good trick in his wallet; and all three of them began to take their pleasure somewhat sadly.

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The most cunning of the three clerks, a Burgundian, perceiving that the day of reckoning was come, said, "Gentlemen, it is expedient to adjourn for a week!" as if he were in a court of law. And notwithstanding the situation was fraught with danger, the other two began to laugh immoderately.

"Tell us what we owe," saith the one, who had in his pouch those twelve sous which he rubbed together as if he hoped by this exciting movement to cause them to breed little ones. A Picard was he, a choleric devil, ever eager to take offence at anything at all which might have enabled him, with a clear conscience, to hurl the host through the window.

Thus spake he with a waggish air as 'twere ten thousand doubloons he had invested in the sun.

"Six crowns, my lords," saith their host with outstretched palm.

"Vicomte, I cannot suffer you to pay for my entertainment!" said the third student, an Angevin, and cunning as a woman in love.

"Nor I!" quoth the Burgundian.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" cried the Picard. "You do but jest: I am at your service!"

"God's belly!" cried the Angevin; "thou wouldst not have us pay thrice. Our host would not suffer it!"

"Why all this ado?" said the Burgundian. "Whosoever shall tell the worst tale, let him pay the reckoning!"

"Who shall be judge?" demanded the Picard, releasing his twelve sous.

"Pardieu! Our host; he will give us best hearing, for is

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he not a man of taste?" said the Angevin. "Come! master cook, sit you there, wet your gullet and lend us your ears. The hearing is begun!"

Whereupon mine host sat him down, first taking the precaution to supply himself lavishly with wine.

"I begin!" cried the Angevin. "List to me":

In our duchy of Anjou the country folk are faithful followers of the most holy Catholic religion, for not one but would do penance or slay a heretic that he might not forego his share of Paradise. Gadzooks! if a scurvy psalm-droner passed that way, he would find himself willy-nilly under the daisies before he had time to perceive who had despatched him.

It thus befell that a good man of Larzé returning, one night, from saying his paternosters to the wine-pots of Pomme-de-Pin, wherein he had drowned his wits and his memory, fell into a ditch of stagnant water believing himself to be in his bed. A neighbour of his, yclept Godenot, finding him already stiffening in the frost, sith 'twas winter time, cries to him jestingly, saying, "Marry and pray what are you waiting there for?"

"A thaw!" replies the jolly toper, finding himself fast in the icy grip.

So this Godenot, good Christian that he was, rescued him from his sorry plight, and escorted him to the door of his dwelling, for he greatly respected the good wine which is lord of that country. The silly daddipole then tumbled into the bed of the serving-wench, who was right young and comely, and fuddled with wine the old

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woodcock proceeded to plough the wrong furrow, thinking it to be his wife and feeling gratefully astonished for the youthfulness he found there.

Hearing her goodman's voice, the wife set up such a hullabaloo as never was heard before, which when the old fellow heard it, he weened he was not upon the road to salvation, which fretted him more than he could say. "Aha!" said he, "God thus punishes me for not having said my prayers in the church." But he cast the blame upon the wine which thus so befuddled his memory, and climbing into his own bed, assured his spouse repeatedly that for his best cow, he would not have had this mischief upon his conscience. "'Tis nothing," said his wife, who, having been told by the wench that she had been dreaming of her lover, gave her a smart tap or two to teach her not to sleep so soundly. But the goodman was sore troubled in his heart at the enormity of his naughty deed, and so full of the fear of God was he that he wept tears of wine.

"My sugar!" cries the goodwoman, "tomorrow you shall go and confess, and then we'll speak no more on't."

Off trotted old addlepate to the confessional and in all humility recounted his sin to the rector who was a good old priest and, in truth, well fitted to be God's right-hand man in heaven.

"A mistake is not a sin!" said he to his penitent; "tomorrow must you fast and be absolved."

"Fast! Right gladly!" quoth the goodman; "that need not prevent one from drinking!"

"Tut! Tut!" replies the priest; "but you must drink



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water only, and eat naught save a quarter of a loaf and an apple!"

All the way home, for he dared not trust his memory, old cocklebrain kept repeating to himself the prescribed penance; but tho' he loyally began with a quartern loaf and an apple, he reached home muttering to himself, "A quartern of apples and a loaf."

And so for the purification of his soul, he began his fast, and when his spouse had fetched him a loaf from the larder and had unhooked a string of apples from the beam, he set sadly to work. Heaving a great sigh, he arrived at the last mouthful of bread, and indeed he was hard pressed to know where to put it, for he was crammed to the chin. His wife admonished him, saying that God desires not the death of a sinner, and that for want of pushing a crust of bread into his paunch, he could not be reproached with putting something else in the wrong place.

"Hold thy peace, woman!" cried he; "if it burst my belly, I must fast!"

"I have paid my scot—it's your turn now, Vicomte," said the Angevin, looking slily at the Picard.

"The winepots are empty!" cried mine host. "Ho there! More liquor!"

"Drink!" cried the Picard. "Wet words flow better than dry!"

Whereupon he gulped down his potful of wine leaving not a drop, and clearing his throat like a parson began the following narrative:

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Hark ye! Ye must know that our little maids in Picardy, before they begin housekeeping for themselves, are accustomed to acquire, albeit virtuously, their petticoats, crockery, chests, in a word, all the necessary utensils of marriage, and for that purpose they take service at Péronne, Abbeville, Amiens, or other towns, as serving-wenches, wiping glasses, washing dishes, folding linen, carrying in the dinner and anything else they are called upon to carry. Thus they can all marry as soon as they have acquired something more than one naturally brings to a husband. They are the best housekeepers in the world, for they are well versed in this art and everything else beside.

A maiden of Azonville, which is the land of which I am lord by inheritance, having heard folks tell of Paris, where the people would not stoop even to pick up six crowns, and where one could live for a whole day by inhaling the steam which issues forth from the pastry-cooks' shops, so fattening is it, cudgelled her brains how she might best go there, hoping to bring back as much wealth as you would find in a Church collection-box. Putting her best foot foremost, she plodded along, and arrived there with only a pocketful of emptiness. There at the Porte Saint-Denis, she fell in with a crowd of lusty soldiers posted as watchdogs, in case of trouble between the Papists and Protestants. The sergeant, seeing this behooded merchandise, sticks his hat on one side, shakes out the feather, twirls his moustaches, raises his voice, rolls his eye, puts his hand on his hip, and stops the wench to see if she was properly pierced,





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telling her that otherwise it was his duty to prevent girls from entering Paris.

Thus to tease her, with devil a smile upon his face, he enquired her business, feigning to believe that she had come to take the keys of Paris by assault. To which the naïve little wench replied that she had only sought a good place in which she might take service, and that she had no evil designs, only a desire to earn something.

"Very well then, my pretty one, I will give thee employ," quoth the waggish fellow. "I also am a Picard, and will arrange for thee to enter here where thou shalt receive treatment that even a queen might well envy, and other good things besides."

So saying, he led her to the guard-room, where he bade her scrub the floor, scour the pots, tend to the fire and keep an eye on all things, adding that, should the place suit her, she should have thirty Parisian sols per man. Seeing that the detachment would be there for a month, she was like to gain ten crowns; and at their departure would come others, who would make good terms with her; thus, by honest tact, would she be enabled to return to her own country bearing money and gifts from Paris. Singing and whistling, she cleaned the guard-room, scoured everything, and so well did she prepare the food, that the good soldiers found the place as spick and span as a Benedictine refectory. Thereupon being mighty well pleased, each of them gave the serving-wench a sol, and their appetites appeased, they put her into the bed of their commandant, who was in town

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with his lady, and they caressed her with a thousand titillations like philosophical soldiers, *id est*, in love with good things. When she was enwrapped in the sheets, to prevent brawls and quarrels, they drew lots for their turns, lined up and did most heartily bestir themselves with the little Picard, speaking no word, like well trained men, but each taking at least twenty-six sols' worth at a time. This was harder work than she had liking for; still, poor maid, she gave of her best, tho' in doing so, she closed not an eye nor aught besides the whole of the night. In the morning, seeing the soldiers sound asleep, she rose up, happy to find a whole skin on her belly after so hot a gruelling, and although something aweary, gained the outer air and crossed the country taking with her her thirty sols.

When she was on the road to Picardy, she encountered one of her friends who, following her example, was hastening to try her luck in Paris, but stopped her to question her as to the conditions of service there.

"Ah! Perrine," said she, "go not there. You would need have buttocks of iron, and e'en so they would soon be worn out!"

"Thy turn, thou big-bellied Burgundian," said he, slapping his neighbour's paunch with a resounding thwack. "Spit up thy story or pay the piper!"

"By the Queen of Horns," answered the Burgundian. "By my troth! By my life! By God! By the devil! I have nought but the tales of the Court of Burgundy which are our only current coin."



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“A murrain on it!” cried the other, pointing to the empty flagons, “are we not in the land of Beauffremont? Then will I tell you of an adventure well-known throughout Dijon, and which happened whilst I was there in command, and, certes, is worthy to be recorded.”

There was a sergeant at law, one Franc-Taupin, an old sackful of iniquity, always cantankerous, ever at loggerheads with his neighbours, a slippery customer, whose jokes were of little comfort to those whom he sent to the gibbet; and i'faith, he was in the right cue to find lice in bald pates and lechery in Heaven. This same Taupin, spurned on all sides, took unto his bosom a wife, who, as good fortune would have it, was as sweet as the skin of an onion, and she, perceiving the distempered condition of her husband, was at more pains to bring happiness into his home than another would have been to present him with a pair of horns. But though she gave him obedience in all things, and for the sake of peace would, God willing, have passed golden excrement, the surly old curmudgeon was less sparing of his blows than is a debtor with his promissory notes. This cruel usage continued despite the prudence and angelic disposition of the poor wife who, unable to bear it any longer, reported matters to her parents who, thereupon, came to the house. When they were thus come, the husband declared unto them that his wife was half-witted, that she caused him nought but displeasure, and made his life a burden; that she never failed to waken him from his first sleep, came not to open the door but left him to

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stand without in the snow and rain, and neglected his household in every way. His breeches wanted buttons and his shoulder-knots tags. The linen was mildewed, the wine soured, the firewood damp, the bed was always creaking, and that at unseasonable moments. In a word, things were in a bad way. His wife gave answer to this lying discourse by pointing to the clothes and things generally all orderly and in good repair.

Whereupon the sergeant complained that he was ill-used, his dinner was never ready, or shouldn't be; then the broth would be greasy or the gravy cold, no wine or wine-cups were set on the table, the meat juiceless, lacking sauce or parsley, the mustard stale; he found hairs in the roast meat, or the napery soiled, which cost him his appetite, i'faith, nothing she did was to his liking.

The astonished woman contented herself with repudiating, albeit politely, these faults to which she was so much a stranger.

"Ha!" cried he; "thou dost deny it, thou skinful of dung! Look ye, friends, to-day you shall dine with me and see for yourselves her misdoings. And if she but serves me well, even this once, I will own myself wrong in all I have said; ne'er again will I lift my hand to her, but she shall wear the breeches and halberd and take command here."

"'Tis well!" said she gaily. "I shall from henceforth be mistress here as well as wife!"

The husband, right confident of his wife's shortcomings and imperfections, ordered the dinner to be served under a vine in the courtyard, thinking thus to be able

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to bawl after her should she tarry in her journeyings from the table to the buttery.

The good little housewife discharged her duties with a right good will. She made the plates to shine like mirrors, the mustard was fresh and mixed to perfection, the dinner so pleasantly concocted that it made one's mouth water, enticing as stolen fruit, glasses a-gleam, the wine cool, and all so good, so fresh and so white, that it was a feast that would have done honour to a Bishop's leman. But just as she stood before the table giving that last look around, so beloved of all good housewives, her husband came hammering at the door. At the same moment, an accursed hen, who had taken it into her head to cram herself with grapes, let fall an ample dropping of dung right on the middle of the snowy linen cloth. The poor wench was like to die of mortification; and so great was her despair, that she could think of no other way of concealing the incontinence of the hen than to cover the incongruous mess with a plate, whereon she put fruits taken hastily from her pocket, without regard for their arrangement. And that none might perceive there was aught amiss, she hastily served the soup, begged everyone to be seated, and to eat and be merry.

Seeing this well-ordered repast, all present exclaimed with delight, saving the old devil of a husband, who, with sullen mien and knitted brows, sat growling to himself, lacking nothing but ever seeking some trifling occasion to deal a blow at his wife. Happy in the protection of her relations, she took advantage of this to chaff him, saying:

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"Here is your dinner, hot and well-served, clean napery, salt-cellars filled, crockery shining, well-cooled wine, new-baked bread. What is amiss? What lack you? What will you? What would you?"

"Dung!" yelled he, boiling with rage.

The housewife picked up the plate, saying:

"My love, it is there!"

When he saw this, the lawyer was dumbfounded, for he thought his wife was in league with the devil. Whereupon he was gravely taken to task by the parents who rated him soundly, and delivered themselves of more sallies, at his expense, in a twinkling, than a scrivener engrosses folios in a month.

From that day, the lawyer lived in peace and quietness with his spouse who, at the least sign of peevishness, frowned at him saying, "Are you looking for some more dung?"

"Who has done worst?" cried the Angevin, clapping the landlord on the shoulder.

"He has! He has!" shouted the other two, beginning to wrangle like holy fathers in council, fighting with one another, flinging the goblets at one another's heads, hoping by a lucky chance to make good their escape in the general confusion.

"I'll see you agreed!" cried mine host, seeing that where he had before three willing debtors, now no one gave a thought to the reckoning.

They stopped horrified.

"I'll tell you a better: ye shall pay me ten sols apiece!"



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"List to our host!" cried the Angevin.

It happened that in this faubourg of Notre-Dame la Riche, wherein this inn now stands, there lived a comely young maiden who, in addition to the gifts of nature, had good store of crowns. Thus as soon as she was of an age and strength to bear the burden of matrimony, she had as many lovers as there are sols in the poor-box at St. Gatien's on Easter Day. This girl chose one who, saving your honours, was the equal of any two monks, to do all that was needful both by night and day. So were they betrothed and the marriage was speeded on. But as the bliss of the first night drew nigh, it caused some misgivings to the maiden who was subject to an infirmity of her internal machinery whereby she was apt to expel wind like unto the explosion of bombs.

Now fearing lest her infirmity should betray her on that first night whilst her mind should be occupied with other things, she sought the counsel of her mother and implored her aid.

The good dame declared that this peculiar property of engendering wind was an heritage of the family and had occasioned her much distress in her day. Nathless, God had had pity on her affliction, and for the past seven years she had expelled nothing. The final blast had been sounded when she paid a last tribute to her deceased husband. "But," added she to her daughter, "I have an infallible remedy bequeathed me by my dear mother for bringing these superfluous reports to nought and expelling them noiselessly; and sith those exhalations

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tions are also made odourless, all scandal is avoided. To do this, it is necessary to accumulate the windy matter and to retain it at the mouth of the aperture, then push hard, and it will pass out silently. In our family this is known as 'Strangling the wind'."

The girl, well content to know how to strangle her wind, thanked her mother and tripped gaily away, storing up her wind like an organ blower who awaits the first note of Mass. When she was come to the nuptial apartment, she determined to let it forth on entering the bed, but alas, the elusive element, which she had cooked so well, refused to budge an inch.

The husband then came, and I leave to your nimble imagination to picture how sped love's broil that merry battle in which, with two things one makes a thousand, if one can. In the middle of the night, the bride withdrew upon some slight pretext, albeit she speedily returned, and in clambering back to her place in the bed, she went off like the report of a cannon, so that you might have thought it would split the bedhangings.

"Woe is me! I have mis-fired!" cried she.

"Pardieu! my sweet chuck!" I said to her. "Let them go then! You would get your living in the army with such artillery!" 'Twas my own wife!

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared the clerks, bursting out into guffaws of merriment, holding their sides and loudly praising the landlord.

"Hast thou, Vicomte, ever heard a better tale?"

"Ha! What a tale!"



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"Marry! This is a tale!"

"'Twas a tale of tales!"

"Ay, a king of tales!"

"Beshrew me, it puts all others in the shade; henceforth, we will have none other than landlords' tales!"

"S'Blood! Never in my life did I hear such a tale!"

"My faith! I can hear that explosion."

"God's belly! I would fain hear that orchestra!"

"Ha, my good host," said the Angevin gravely, "we cannot leave this place without clapping eyes on our hostess; and if we do not ask to put our lips to her instrument, 'tis due to the respect we have for so brave a storyteller!"

Whereupon they all fell to praising loudly the inn-keeper, his tale and his wife's you-know-what, that the old tavern-keeper, disarmed by this artless laughter and high-flown eulogies, shouted for his wife. But she came not; and the clerks cried, not without guile, "Let us go and see her!"

They all went out of the room. The host, taking a candle, went before to light the way; but seeing the street door half-open, the rascally knaves made off, fleet as shadows, leaving the host to settle his reckoning with another of his wife's connubial ventosities.



THE CONTINENCE OF KING FRANCIS I



EVERYONE knows of the adventure through which King Francis, first of that name, was captured like a silly popinjay and conducted to the town of Madrid, in Spain. There the Emperor Charles V locked him in one of his castles and had him jealously guarded as if he were some priceless jewel. Here the prince, now deceased but never to be forgotten, soon became weary and heart-sick, for he greatly loved freedom and comfort, and he no more understood living thus encaged than a cat would know what to do with a piece of lace. He fell into strange moods of such profound melancholy, that his letters, having been read in open council by his mother, Madame d'Angoulême, Madame Catherine, the Dauphine, Cardinal Duprat, Monsieur de Montmorency, and others at the head of affairs in France, well knowing the libidinousness of the King, decided, after due reflexion, to send to him Queen Marguerite, from whom he would be sure to receive solace in his afflictions, sith the good lady was well beloved by him, merry of heart and learned in much wisdom. But she, fearing for the well-being of her soul, for she knew the peril of being alone with the king in his cell, sent a sagacious secretary, the Sieur de Fizes, to the Court of Rome, with instructions to beg of the Pontiff a formal brief granting special

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indulgences, containing proper absolution for the lesser sins, which, seeing their blood relationship, the Queen might be obliged to commit in order to relieve the royal distress.

At this time, Adrian VII, the Batavian, still wore the triple crown, who, good fellow that he was, did not forget, notwithstanding the scholastic ties which bound him to the emperor, that the eldest son of the Catholic Church was involved in this affair and gallantly sent to Spain a special legate, equipped with full power to save, without too much offence to God, the Queen's soul and the King's body.

This very exciting affair put all the Court gentlemen into a terrible quandary and brought a mighty itching to the feet of the ladies, who felt such an overwhelming devotion for the Crown, that they would all have offered to go to Madrid but for the black suspicion of Charles V, who would not give the King leave to see any of his subjects nor even the members of his family. It was therefore necessary to contrive the departure of the Queen of Navarre.

There was talk of little else than of this most deplorable continence and lack of amorous merchandise whereof the prince was such a hearty consumer.

In fact, what with this and that, the women finished up by thinking less of the King than of his codpiece. The Queen was the first to say that she wished she had wings. To which Monseigneur Odet de Châtillon replied that she did not need them in order to become an angel. A certain Madame l'Amirale reproached God that it



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was not possible to send to the poor king, by a messenger, that thing which he so sorely needed, sith each lady would have been happy to lend it in turn.

"It is well that God has fastened it on!" exclaimed the Dauphine, sedately; "or our husbands would leave us on woefully short commons during their absence."

So many things were said and so many thought of, that the Queen of all the Marguerites was, at her departure, charged by these good dames to embrace the captive fervently for all the ladies of the realm; and had it been possible to prepare enjoyment as one prepares mustard, the Queen would have taken a supply sufficient for the two Castiles.

It so happened while Madame Marguerite, notwithstanding the snow, was crossing the mountains with relays of mules, pressing forward with her consolations as one who hastens to a fire, that the King found himself affected with a heaviness of the loins such as he had never before experienced. In the extremity of his misery, he unburdened himself to the Emperor Charles, hoping thus to obtain a remedy for his affliction, and, at the same time, pointing out that it would be an everlasting disgrace if one king allowed another to die for want of a wench. The Castilian showed that he was a good-natured fellow. Thinking that he would be able to reimburse himself from the Spaniards, when his captive was ransomed, he arranged with the prisoner's guards to comply discreetly with his requests. Thus a certain penniless captain, Don Hijos de Lara y Lopez Barra de Ponto, who had not a crown-piece in spite of his noble

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ancestry, and who had for some time been considering retrieving his fortunes at the Court of France, thought to push open the door of success by procuring for this lord a seductive armful of warm flesh; and those who know aught of this merry monarch and his Court can decide whether he judged rightly or no.

When it came to this captain's turn to go on duty in the King of France's apartment, he very respectfully enquired if the King would be pleased to permit him to ask one question concerning a certain thing about which he was as curious as about papal indulgences. Whereupon the Prince cast aside his ill-humour, and turning round in his chair, made a sign of consent. The captain begged him not to be offended at the liberty he took in thus addressing him; but he had heard it said that he, the King, was one of the most libidinous men in France, and he was anxious to know if the ladies of his Court were experts in the art of love.

The poor king, calling to mind many a warm encounter, sighed deeply and replied that no women of any country, even of the moon, knew more of these titillating secrets than the ladies of France; and the memory of the succulence, lavishness and vigorous attentions of one, in particular, made him so much aware of his manhood, that he felt were she but within reach, he would tumble and tousle her, even were they lying on a rotten plank a hundred feet above a precipice.

So saying, the good King, a right lusty fornicator if ever there was one, darted such rapid shafts of fire and life from his eyes, that the captain—brave man though

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he was—felt his guts turn to water, so fierce was the sacred flame of royal lust.

But recovering his courage, he fell to defending the ladies of Spain, holding that in Castile alone was the art of love completely understood, for sith it was the most religious of all Christian countries, the more the ladies feared the damnation which is the lot of those who yield to a lover, the more pleasure they were likely to give seeing they would be denied these joys hereafter. Furthermore, if the King would be willing to wager one of the best and most prosperous estates in France, he would undertake to give his Majesty such a night of love à l'*espagnole*, that unless he took care he would be in danger of having his soul drawn through his cod-piece.

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the King, leaping from his chair. "Odds belly, but I will give thee the manor of Ville-aux-Dames, in my province of Touraine, with all the rights of the chase and jurisdiction over high and low."

Then the captain, who was well acquainted with the mistress of the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Toledo, begged her to grind the King upon the wheel of love, and to demonstrate to him the infinitely superior curvettings of the Castilians as compared with the languid frothing of the French. To this the Marchesa d'Amaesguy consented for the honour of Spain; and also for the pleasure of tasting for herself the particular kind of paste of which God makes kings, seeing that the Princes of the Church were the only pies at which she had

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nibbled. Thus she came, lusty as a lion that has just broken from his cage, and made the bones and marrow of the King to crack so fiercely, that it would have been the death of any other man. But this lord was so well stiffened, so famished and so hard-bitten, that he no longer felt a bite, and the lady retired in some discomfiture from this terrific fray believing she had had the devil to shrive.

The captain, confident of his agent's success, came to salute his lord, expecting to have to tender his homage for the promised estate. Whereupon the King remarked jestingly, that the Spanish ladies certainly were of a tolerable warmth and energetic workers, but when a luscious delicacy was required, they substituted frenzy, so that she mistook each titillation for a sneeze or a case of rape: to put it briefly, that the delights of the Frenchwoman, while never tiring the drinker, left him thirstier than when he began; and that with the ladies of his Court love was an incomparable sweetness not the pommellings of a baker at his kneading-trough.

The poor captain was much piqued by these words. In spite of the keen sense of honour to which the King laid claim, he suspected that this lord would cheat him like any student filching his scrap of love from a Paris brothel. Nathless, doubting whether the Marchesa had not been a little too Spanish for the King, he requested the prisoner to give him his revenge, pledging his word that he should have, without fail, a veritable nymph, and would assuredly win his fief. The King was too courteous and gallant a gentleman to refuse this re-









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quest; and even made a pretty speech, saying he hoped he should lose the wager.

Then, after Vespers, the guards ushered, all deliciously warm, into the King's chamber, a lady most radiantly white, most enticingly frolicsome, with long hair, velvet hands, plumping out her gown with every movement; for she was most succulently rounded, with a laughing mouth, and eyes melting in advance, a woman to make Hell itself hold its peace; while her first word had such a potent effect, that the King's prick-purse burst its bonds.

On the morrow, after breakfast, when this dainty duck slipped away, the good captain came beaming and triumphant into the room.

At sight of him, the prisoner cried:

"Baron de la Ville-aux-Dames, God give you like delights! I am in love with my prison! Adzookers! I will not judge between the loves of our countries but gladly pay the wager!"

"I knew it!" said the captain.

"How so?" asked the King.

"Because, Sire, that is my wife!"

That is the origin of the Larrays of la Ville-aux-Dames in our country, since the name Lara-y-Lopez was finally corrupted into Larray.

It was a good family that rendered loyal and affectionate service to the Kings of France and was exceedingly fruitful.

In due course the Queen of Navarre reached the King, while he, already weary of the Spanish seductions, was

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only too happy to amuse himself in the French fashion. But the rest is not the subject of this tale.

I reserve to myself the right to tell you elsewhere how the legate contrived to wipe out the sin of the thing, and the delicate words of our Queen Marguerite, who certainly deserves a saintly niche in this collection, she the first inventor of these merry tales.

The morals of this one may be easily understood. Firstly, kings should never allow themselves to be captured in warfare any more than their archetype at the game of my lord Palamedes. For look you, what a terrible and calamitous evil falls upon his people when a King is taken captive.

Had it been a Queen or even a Princess, what worse fate! But I doubt that the thing could happen again except with connivance. For what boots it to imprison a flower of the royal house?

I think too highly of the devilry of Astaroth, Lucifer and others to imagine that were they in power they would withhold that which is the delight of all, that goodly light at which poor sufferers seek to warm themselves.

It was necessary that the worst of all the devils, *id est* a wicked old female heretic, should find herself in possession of a throne, for sweet Mary of Scotland to find herself in prison, to the shame of all the knights of Christendom, who should have come forthwith, not waiting for an assignation, to the ramparts of Fotheringay, leaving thereof no single stone upon another.

THE MERRY QUIPS OF THE NUNS OF POISSY



THE Abbey of Poissy has been celebrated by the writers of olden days as the haunt of pleasure, where nuns first began merrily to disport themselves, and from whence proceeded many a good story causing much laughter amongst the laity to the detriment of our holy religion. Furthermore, this Abbey was the subject of many proverbs which are not truly comprehended by folk to-day, however industriously they sift and grind, the better to digest them.

Shouldst thou ask of one of them what may signify the "olives of Poissy," he will gravely make answer that 'tis an expression which has to do with truffles and that the manner of stowing them, whereof these chaste young women were wont jestingly to tell, did doubtless have reference to a certain special kind of sauce.

Thus once in a hundred times do these ponderous quill-drivers light on the truth. To return to these good nuns, 'twas said, of course in jest, that they had liefer find a whore than an honest woman in their shifts. Certain other wits have admonished them for imitating the lives of the saints after their own fashion, saying that that which they most revered in Mary of Egypt was her way of paying the ferryman. Hence the joke "Honouring the Saints à la mode de Poissy." Then there is the



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Crucifix of Poissy which keeps the belly warm. Also the Matins of Poissy which finished up with the choir-boys. And again of a buxom codpiece-darling strumpet well versed in the tricks of love, 'twas said, "She's a Nun of Poissy!" A certain thing thou wottest of and which man can but lend 'twas called "the key of the Abbey of Poissy." As for the "Gateway" of this Abbey, everyone knows what that might be, for this gateway, door, wicket, opening, gap, is forever agape, far easier to open than to shut, and costs much to keep in repair. In a word, at that time there was no pretty conceit connected with the art of love but had for its birthplace the convent of Poissy. But you must know that there is a deal of falsehood, hyperbole and exaggeration in these proverbs, jests, fibs, and cock-and-bull stories.

The nuns of Poissy were good little maids who, now here now there, did, of a surety, hoodwink God to do the Devil a turn, even as so many of the rest of us, for the flesh is weak; and nuns though they were, they had their little weaknesses. Naturally, you would find here and there a hole in the material, and it was there that the evil found its way in.

But the truth of the matter is that all these misdoings were the work of one particular abbess who had fourteen children, all living, as one might expect, seeing they had been compounded at leisure. The fantastic love affairs and wild orgies of this lady of royal blood made the Convent of Poissy notorious. And no tale of naughty adventure in all the Abbeys of France but was attributed to these poor maids who would have been content

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with but a tenth part thereof. Then, as all know, was the Abbey reformed, and these saintly nuns deprived of the little happiness and liberty they had hitherto enjoyed. In an old record-book of the Abbey of Turpenay, near Chinon, which in the later unquiet times had found refuge in the library of Azay, where the present curator received it with joy, I chanced upon a fragment entitled "The Hours of Poissy" which 'twas evident had been composed by a merry abbot of Turpenay for the better amusement of his neighbours at Ussé, Azay, Mongaucher, Sacché, and other places round about. These I give under the authority of the monastic habit, albeit I alter them in my own fashion, since I have been constrained to translate them from Latin into French. I will now begin:

'Twas thus, at Poissy, the nuns were accustomed, when the Princess daughter of the King, their abbess, was retired to her bed . . . (She it was who did name it "faire la petite oie" [little goose tricks]) . . . to confine themselves in love's business to the preliminaries, prologues, prefaces, introductions, protocols, advertisements, notices, forewords, summaries, prospectuses, arguments, notes, epigraphs, titles, subtitles, title-pages, marginalia, frontispieces, observations, gilt-edges, pretty bookmarks, clasps, rules, embellishments, vignettes, tailpieces, and engravings, and sought not to open the merry book to read, re-read, study, learn, and understand the contents. And so did she assemble in a body all the extra-judicial little tittilations of that charming

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language which comes so pleasantly from the lips, yet makes no sound, and withal practised them so chastely that she died a virgin—her figure and condition unspoiled, unimpaired.

This gallant art was thereafter profoundly studied by the ladies of the Court who took lovers, some for the "little goose game," others for honour's sake, and at times, they took also those who had over them the right of high and low jurisdiction, and were masters of everything, a state much to be preferred. But to my story:

When this virtuous princess was a-bed, naked and unashamed between the sheets, these damsels, gay of heart, with cheeks as yet unwrinkled, did creep noiselessly from their cells and came to amuse themselves in the cell of one of their sisters who was greatly loved by all. There, they chattered gaily, sweetening their discourse with comfits, sweetmeats, syrups, girlish prattle, pulling their elders to pieces, mimicking them, indulging in harmless mockery, relating tales that made them laugh till they cried, and making merry in a thousand ways; now measuring their feet to see which had the smallest, comparing the rounded whiteness of their arms, finding out whose nose had the ill-fortune to blush after supper; comparing their freckles, showing one another the exact position of their birthmarks, estimating who possessed the fairest skin, the prettiest complexion, the comeliest form. For you must know that among these figures dedicated to God, some were thin, some plump, some smooth, some hollow-chested, some bulging, some supple, some pockmarked; in fact, there were

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some of all sorts. So would they dispute who should take the shortest length of stuff for her girdle, and she whose span was least was pleased; she knew not why. Oft times they told one another their dreams and the things which they had seen in them. Sometimes one or two, sometimes all of them, dreamed they had tight hold of the keys of the Abbey. Likewise they took counsel one of another on their little ailments. One had a splinter in her finger; another had a whitlow; this one had got up with a bloodshot eye; that one had dislocated her forefinger in telling her rosary. Everyone of them had some little thing the matter with her.

"Aha! thou hast lied to our Mother: thy nails are spotted with white," said one to her neighbour.

"Thou didst remain long at confession this morning, sister," said another; "hadst thou so many little sins to tell?"

Then since there is nothing more like Miss Tabby Cat than master Tom Cat, they avowed life-long friendship, quarrelled, sulked, wrangled, agreed and disagreed, feigned jealousy, pinching one another for fun, and laughing till they were pinched again, and playing tricks upon the novices.

Oft times they would say:

"If a gendarme should drop in here to get out of the rain, where should we lodge him?"

"With Sister Ovide; her cell is the largest; he could get into it with his helmet on."

"What is this you say?" cried Sister Ovide. "Are not all our cells of a size?"



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Whereupon all the wenches burst out like ripe figs.

One evening their little council was augmented by a little novice of seventeen, seemingly as innocent as a babe new born, so that she might have been given the sacrament without confession. Her mouth had, of times, watered at the thought of these secret meetings, little feasts and junketings with which the younger nuns enlivened the holy captivity of their bodies, and had shed many a tear that she was not admitted thereunto.

"Well, my little doe!" said Sister Ovide, "and did you have a good night?"

"Oh no!" cried she. "I have been eaten up by fleas!"

"Aha, you have fleas in your cell? But you must rid yourself thereof with all speed. Don't you know that the rule of our Order enjoins us to banish them hence, so that never again for the remainder of her conventual life shall a sister clap eyes on so much as the tail of one of them?"

"No," replied the novice.

"'Tis well; I see I must instruct you. Dost thou notice any fleas here—any fleamarks?—any smell of fleas? Is there any sign of fleas in my cell? Look!"

"I find naught," said the little novice, who was Made-moiselle de Fiennes, "and perceive no other odour than our own."

"Then do as I tell you, so shalt thou be bitten no more. So soon as you are pricked, my daughter, pluck off your shift, and see to it that you sin not the while you are looking over all your body. Occupy your mind with the accursed flea, seeking it in all good faith, giving heed to none other thing, thinking but of the flea and



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how you may catch him, for 'tis a difficult task, seeing you can be easily deceived by those little black spots which are but birthmarks. Have you any, my poppet?"

"Yes," said she, "I have two purple freckles; one on my shoulder, and one on my hinderpart, something lower, but 'tis hidden in a fold of flesh."

"How is't then that you have seen it?" demanded Sister Perpetua.

"I have never seen it; 'twas Monsieur de Montrezor who first discovered it."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the sisters; "saw he nothing further?"

"He saw all," answered she. "I was very little, and he no more than nine years of age. We were playing together."

The nuns having much ado to restrain their merriment, Sister Ovide continued:

"This aforesaid flea will spring from your leap to your eyes, will endeavour to hide himself in the hollows, in the thickets, in the ditches, hopping from valley to mountain, in his efforts to escape you; the rules of the house ordain that you shall steadfastly pursue him repeating *Aves* the while. As a rule, at the third *Ave* the animal is captured."

"The flea?" enquired the novice.

"Exactly! The flea!" replied Sister Ovide. "But that you may avoid the perils of the chase, have a care in putting your finger upon the beast, that you touch no other thing in that place. Thus without heed to his cries, plaints, moans, writhings and twistings (so per-

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adventure will he rebel, as 'tis frequently the case) you must crush him under your thumb or any other finger of the hand occupied in holding him; then with the other hand seek a scarf with which to bind the eyes of this flea and put an end to his cavortings, since, when he no longer sees clearly, he will not know whither to go. Nathless, he will be able to bite you and e'er now will be mad with fury, open gently his beak and delicately place therein a sprig of the holy boxwood which is on the little altar hanging above your pillow. Thus will the flea be compelled to remain quiet. But remember, that according to the teaching of our Order, you can own no single thing upon earth; therefore can this beast, in no wise, be yours. Tell yourself that it is one of God's creatures and strive to render it more docile. Therefore, before all things, it is necessary to ascertain three important items—if the flea be male, if it be female, if it be virgin. Should it be virgin (which is very rare, for these creatures have no morals—they be all lecherous strumpets ready to yield themselves to the first comer) seize its hindermost feet, draw them under its belly, tie them with one of your hairs and carry it to the Mother Superior who will decide its fate after having consulted the Chapter. Should he be a male——”

“How may one know if a flea be a virgin?” demanded the inquisitive novice.

“To begin with,” replied Sister Ovide, “it is sad and melancholy, laughs not as do the others, neither bites so vigorously, has mouth less agape, and blushes if touched you know where——”

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"In that case," replied the novice, "I have been bitten by a male."

Hereat all the sisters began to laugh so immoderately, that most of them expelled a ventosity with a loud blast; and so vigorous was the attack that she made also a little stream of water, and Sister Ovide pointed to the floor, saying:

"See! there is never wind without rain!"

The little novice laughed too, believing this mirth to have been caused by her thoughtless remark to the sister.

"Then," continued Sister Ovide, "if it be a male flea, take your scissors, or your lover's dagger, if perchance he hath given thee one as a souvenir before thou didst enter the convent. In a word, equipped with some sharp instrument, thou shalt with care, slit open its belly. Expect to hear him yelp, cough, implore your pardon, spit, twist, make sheeps' eyes, and any other thing he may think of to save him from this operation; but be not surprised. Screw your courage to the sticking place by thinking that in so doing thou art bringing a perverted creature into the way of salvation. Next must thou dexterously pluck out the guts, the liver, the lights, the heart, the gizzard, and all the vital parts, dip them repeatedly in holy water, pray that the interior of this creature may be made holy. Then return speedily all these entrails into the body of the flea who will be impatient to recover them. Having by these means been baptised, his soul will have become Catholic. Swiftly take needle and thread and stitch up his belly with every care. E'en shalt thou pray for it—an attention whereof

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thou wilt see it is sensible from the way it will attentively regard thee and bend the knee to thee when thou shalt address thyself to it. In brief, 'twill cry out no more and have no further desire to bite thee; and one may often chance upon a flea who is ready to die of the pleasure of being converted to our holy faith. Thou shalt serve in like manner any others thou mayst catch; seeing which, the rest will take themselves off after looking with amazement on the converted one, for they be all perverse and fear greatly to become Christians."

"Then, in good sooth, they are therefore very wrong," said the novice. "There can surely be no greater felicity than to be a child of the Church?"

"Certes," replied Sister Ursula, "here we are sheltered from the perils of this world and from love wherein they so richly abound."

"Is there any greater peril than that of producing a child out of season?" demanded one young sister.

"During the recent reign," answered Sister Ursula, shaking her head, "love contracted leprosy, St. Antony's fire, the malady of Ardennes; the red bubo has piled up all these fevers, agonies, pestilences and sufferings in his pretty little mortar and has concocted therefrom a frightful disease from the devil's own recipe, fortunately for convents, for there are numberless affrighted ladies who jealously guard their chastity for fear of that love."

On hearing these terrible words, they clung to one another, afraid but longing to know more.

"And is it sufficient to love to be made to suffer thus?" said one sister.







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"Oh! Good Lord, yes!" cried Sister Ovide.

"Suppose thou givest thy love but for one brief moment to some fine gentleman," replied Sister Ursula; "thou wilt stand a good chance of seeing thy teeth drop out one by one, thy hairs fall one at a time, thy cheeks turn blue; thou wilt suffer the unspeakable sadness of losing thy lashes, and the loss of the choicest treasures will cost thee many a sigh. Many a poor woman is afflicted with a cancer on the end of her nose; there be others who are ceaselessly gnawed by a beast with a thousand claws, who tears at the tenderest parts. So the Pope has been compelled to excommunicate this kind of love."

"Ah! how happy am I to have escaped all that!" cried the novice, crossing herself hastily.

Hearing this evidence of some past love affair, the sisters doubted not but that the speaker had been somewhat scorched from the heat of the crucifix of Poissy, and did but jest with Sister Ovide and make mock at her. Whereat they were joyful to find they had so merry a jade, so lighthearted a wench in their midst; and they charged her to tell them to what adventure they owed her company.

"Alas!" sighed she, "I allowed myself to be bitten by a great big flea who had not been baptised."

At these words the sister of the wind instrument could not restrain a second blast.

"Aha!" said Sister Ovide. "Thou must of necessity regale us with a third. If thou speakest that language in the choir, the Mother Abbess will put thee on the diet of

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Sister Petronelle. So I charge thee, clap a mute on thy instrument."

"Is't true that thou didst know Sister Petronelle during her lifetime, on whom God bestowed the faculty of going but twice in a year to the chamber of commerce?" asked Sister Ursula.

"Yes!" replied Sister Ovide. "It so happened that she remained squatting there all one night until *Matins*, saying, 'There am I, by God's will'; but at the first verse, she was delivered, that she might not miss the Office. Nathless, the late abbess would not admit that this was a concession from above, and said that the eye of God looked not so low. But here is the truth: our departed sister, whose canonization our Order is, at this very moment, endeavouring to obtain from the Pope, and might have obtained long since, could it but have defrayed the cost of the Brief Petronelle, then, had a great desire to see her name inscribed in the Calendar of Saints, which would in no wise harm our Order. To this end, she spent her life in prayer, would remain in an ecstasy before the Altar of the Blessed Virgin, which is hard by the meadows, and pretended she could hear the angelic choirs singing in Paradise so clearly, that she had been able to write down the music. Everyone knows that she took from them that sweet chant *Adoremus*, whereof no mortal man could have breathed a single note. She would remain for days with her eye fixed like a star, fasting, and putting into her body no more nourishment than I could hold within my eye. She had taken a vow to taste no meat, neither cooked nor raw, and would eat

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naught but a crust of bread each day, save on special feast days, when she added to her usual fare a morsel of salt fish without e'en a suspicion of sauce. On this diet, she waxed painfully thin, yellow as saffron, dry as a churchyard bone, for she had been of an ardent humour; and anyone who had had the good fortune to rub up against her would have struck fire from her as from a flint. Howbeit, eat as sparingly as she might, she could in no wise cast off her infirmity to which we are all more or less subject, fortunately or unfortunately for us, for peradventure, were it not so, we might be sore embarrassed.

"This same disability is nothing less than the obligation we are under most villainously to expel, after taking our repast, and like unto the animals, a certain quantity of excrementitious matter, more or less dainty according to the person in question. Sister Petronelle differed from others in that her contributions were dry and hard, like the droppings of an amorous hind, this being the stoniest substance that any gizzard can produce, as you will know if, peradventure, you have felt them under your feet upon the tracks in the forests. And so for their hardness they are known as 'knots' in the language of the Chase. This peculiarity of Sister Petronelle was then in no way supernatural, since by reason of her long fasts, her temperature was ever at white heat. According to the older sisters, her disposition was so burning, that if one plunged her into water, she went fizzle like a glowing ember. Some sisters there be who have accused her of secretly cooking eggs between her toes, in order to bear

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her deprivations. But these were malicious scandals invented to befoul a saintly reputation whereof other nunneries were so jealous. Our sister was piloted on her voyage towards salvation and divine perfection by the Abbé de Saint-Germain-des-Près de Paris—a saintly man, who always ended his admonitions with this advice: that we should take all our troubles to God and submit ourselves to His will, seeing that nought can betide save by His express command. This doctrine, wise though it may appear, has furnished matter for great controversies, and has been finally condemned upon the advice of the Cardinal of Châtillon, who claimed that, since there would therefore be no more sin in the world, the revenue of the Church would be considerably diminished. Still, Sister Petronelle lived imbued with this belief and in ignorance of the danger. When Lent and the fasts of the great jubilee were over, she had need for the first time in eight months, to repair to the privy and thither went she. There she boldly lifted her petticoats and placed herself in position to do that which we poor sinners do rather more often. Still, Sister Petronelle could expel nothing save the beginnings of things, which caused her much puffing and blowing without the rest being persuaded to follow. Again and again, she wriggled her buttocks, puffed out her cheeks, and squeezing all the springs of the machinery, still her guest preferred to remain within her blessed body, only popping his head out of the window like a frog taking the air, but with no desire to fall into the valley of affliction amongst the others, for he felt sure 'twould not be in the odour of



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sanctity; which was very sound reasoning for such a turd as he. Our good saint having come to the end of all her resources, having considerably overstrained her cheek muscles, and stretched the nerves of her bony face in her efforts to obtain relief, till 'twas borne in upon her that no suffering in all the world was so grievous and her anguish having reached the apogee of sphincterial terror, she exclaimed, 'O God! I offer it to thee!' At these pious words, the stony substance cracked off short quite close to the orifice and knocked like a flint against the sides of the privy—croc, croc, croooc—paff! You see, my sisters, she had no need of snuffers and she drew back the rest."

"Then, did she see the angels?" asked one sister.

"Have they a posterior?" demanded another.

"Certes, no!" answered Sister Ursula. "Knowst thou not that at one great assembly God commanded them to be seated, and they made answer that they had not the wherewithal?"

Hereupon all sought their beds: some alone, others almost alone. For they were good girls who wronged only themselves.

I cannot leave them without relating a certain adventure which befell their house, when the Reform was sponging them clean and making saints of them all, as I have said before. In those days the Bishopric of Paris was occupied by a veritable saint who was never known to blow his own trumpet, and cared for none save the poor and suffering, who found refuge in the bosom of this dear old bishop. He set aside his own affairs for those in

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trouble, seeking out the afflicted, and to relieve their woe with his thoughts, words, help, care and money, according to their needs; aiding alike the rich and the poor in their hour of trouble, repairing their souls and bringing them back to God; forever keeping a watchful eye on his flock, dear old shepherd! But the good man gave no heed to his cassock, cloak, breeches, so long as the naked members of his Church were clothed. So charitable was he, that he would have put himself in pawn to rescue some miscreant knave from distress. His servants were hard put to it to look after him. Oft times would he reprimand them when, unasked, they changed his tattered garments for new, and would make them patch and mend as long as the cloth held together. Now this good old archbishop knew that the late lord of Poissy had left a daughter without a penny to her name, after having dissipated her inheritance in eating, drinking, and making merry. This poor lady lived in a miserable hovel, fireless in winter, sunless in springtime, labouring at mean tasks, for she would neither marry beneath her nor sell her chastity. Awaiting the day when he should find a nice young husband with whom to provide her, the prelate conceived the idea of sending her the outer shell of one to mend in the form of his old breeches, a task which, owing to her straitened circumstances, the poor girl was overjoyed to receive.

Thus, one day, when the archbishop was contemplating a visit to the convent of Poissy, to inspect the young ladies there (as we have said before—completely reformed) he gave to one of his servants a pair of his old-



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est breeches sorely needing a few stitches. "Take this, Saintot, to the ladies of Poissy," said he, believing he had said to the *lady* of Poissy; and his mind was so full of cloistral matters, that he remembered not to tell the varlet how he might come to this lady's lodging, for he had ever discreetly concealed her desperate plight.

Blithe as a grasshopper, Saintot did take the breeches and hied him towards Poissy, staying to dally with this friend and that upon the way, quaffing his wine at the wayside taverns and revealing many a good thing to the archbishop's breeches for their profit during the journey.

Eventually he came to the convent of Poissy, and told the abbess that his master had bade him give her these. Thus the varlet departed, leaving with the reverend Mother the vestments which usually modelled in relief the chaste episcopal proportions of the good old archbishop, according to the fashion of that time, as well as the image of those things of which our Eternal Father has deprived his angels, and which lacked not for amplitude in the good prelate.

The abbess, having sent to the nuns the good archbishop's esteemed message, they came scurrying thither, bustling and inquisitive, like a swarm of ants into whose republic a chestnut burr has fallen. As they unfastened the breeches, the front fastening of which gaped in truly horrible fashion, they shrieked with dismay, clapping one hand over their eyes, fearful lest they should see the devil issue forth. The abbess cried:

"Hide yourselves, my daughters. This is the dwelling place of mortal sin!"

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The mother of the novices, peeping between her fingers, somewhat revived the courage of these saintly rabbits, vowing by an *Ave* that no living beast was hid in those breeches. Whereupon all were able to examine that Habitant, blushing at their ease, and came to the conclusion that 'twas the will of the good prelate that they should seek therein some wise admonition or evangelical allegory. Albeit this spectacle caused certain pluckings at the heart-strings of these ultra-virtuous damsels, they paid little heed to the quiverings of their entrails, and sprinkling a little holy water in the depths of the cavern, one ventured to touch it, and another passed her finger through the opening; so much were they pondered on, talked on, thought on, dreamed on, night and day, that on the morrow, after having sung *Matins*, in which the nuns omitted a verse and two responses, one little sister said, "My sisters, I have chanced on the archbishop's meaning. He has sent us, for a mortification, his breeches to repair as a holy admonition against indolence which is mother-abbess of all the vices."

Whereupon they flung themselves upon the breeches, but the abbess took advantage of her high position to retain the right of directing the work of restoration. Therefore did she occupy herself with prayer; while for more than ten days, they unravelled the above mentioned breeches, binding them with silk, making double hems, beautifully sewn, and in all humility.

The Chapter being assembled, 'twas concluded on that the convent should testify, to the archbishop, by

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some sweet souvenir, their joy that he had so thought on his daughters in Christ. Thereupon all, even unto the very youngest novice, wrought some work upon these highly intellectual breeches whereby to do honour to the virtuous old man.

Meanwhile, the prelate had been so busy, that he had completely forgotten his breeches.

'Tis known of a certain nobleman of the Court who, having lost his wife, a barren woman and ill-tempered as the very devil, told the good prelate that he had a great longing for a virtuous woman, steeped in godliness, with whose assistance to found a family of good and beautiful children, and would offer her his hand in marriage and become betrothed to her.

The holy man thought so highly of Mademoiselle de Poissy that, in no long time, she became Madame de Genoilhac. The nuptials were celebrated in the Archbishopric of Paris, where a great feast was held, and the table was graced by the presence of ladies of high degree, the great folk of the Court, amongst whom the bride shone forth with supreme beauty. It was assured that she was a virgin—the Archbishop pledging his word for a maidenhead. When the dishes of sweetmeats and pastries with divers ornaments were set forth upon the white napery, Saintot spoke to the Archbishop, saying, “Your dearly beloved ladies of Poissy send you a fine dish for the centrepiece.”

“Place it there,” said the worthy man, as he looked with admiration upon a lofty erection of velvet, satin bordered with silver and gold embroidery, and gar-

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landed after the manner of an antique vase, whereof the cover exhaled most delicate odours.

Forthwith the bride, who failed not to notice it, found therein sweetmeats, sugar-plums, marchpane, and countless delicious comfits, wherewith the ladies regaled themselves.

At length one of them, an inquisitive little simpleton, perceived a silk cord, and pulling it towards her, revealed to the company the sheath of the human binnacle, to the great embarrassment of the prelate, as peals of laughter burst forth like a charge of grape-shot on all sides.

"Well did they make it the centrepiece," said the husband. "These damoiselles are really endowed with understanding. For there dwell the sugar-plums of marriage."

Could there be any sounder moral than these words of Monsieur de Genoilhac? In good sooth, there could be none better.

HOW THE CHÂTEAU D'AZAY CAME TO BE  
BUILT





**J**EHAN, son of Simon Fourniez, yclept Simponnin, citizen of Tours (originally from the village of Moulinot, nigh unto Beaune, whence, after the fashion of certain innkeepers, he did take the name, at such time when he obtained the position of treasurer to Louis X) being fallen into deep disgrace, was constrained to flee, one day, unto Languedoc with his wife, leaving his son Jacques penniless in Touraine. This fellow, altho' having nothing in the world, save his comeliness, his cloak and his sword, but with that in his codpiece which worn out old gallants would consider boundless wealth, conceived in his mind the fixed intention of rescuing his sire, and at the same time seeking his own fortune at the Court which was then come to Touraine.

So soon as 'twas daybreak, this good Tourainian left his apartment, enveloped in his cloak, leaving only his nose exposed to the air, and his belly so empty that he betook himself through the town suffering no inconveniences from the process of digestion.

He entered the churches and found them beautiful, inspected the chapels, drove the flies from the pictures, counted the naves like an idle sightseer who knows not what to do with his time and money. Oft times, he made a pretence of reciting his paternosters, but in truth did

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but offer silent prayers to the ladies and held out the holy water to them, as they took their departure, followed them afar off, and hoped by such small services to chance on some adventure whereby, at the risk of his life, he might find a protector or a generous mistress.

But two doubloons had he gotten in his belt, upon which he set greater store than upon his skin, since, in good sooth, that would be renewed, but those doubloons never. Each day he took from his hoard the wherewithal to purchase a small loaf and some worthless apples with which he sustained life; and for drink, he had the waters of the Loire, whereof he drank at his pleasure and discretion, which same wise and prudent fare beside suiting his pocket excellently well, made him skittish and agile as a greyhound, giving him a clear head and a warm heart; for of all the syrups, Loire water is the most exhilarating, since, having its source afar off, it is stimulated, on its long journey, by the sandy shores over which it flows till it reaches Tours. So mayst thou wager the poor pillicock had visions of numberless good fortunes and lucky encounters, and what is more, sometimes believed them to be true. Ho! Good fortune! One day, Jacques de Beaune, a name that he cherished, albeit he was in no wise lord of Beaune, making his way along the river side, and so absorbed in cursing his stars and all, since his last doubloon had every appearance of quitting him with but scant ceremony, that at the corner of a side wall, he stumbled against a veiled lady, who exhaled to his enraptured senses all the sweetest perfumes of womanhood. This fair pedestrian, bravely



Boychiera



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mounted upon her dainty pattens, was arrayed in a beautiful gown of Italian velvet with huge satin-lined sleeves; while as a symbol of her high estate, beneath her veil a magnificent diamond of incomparable brilliance gleamed from her brow, like the rays of the setting sun, among her curls, so daintily rolled, piled in rows, plaited, and all so neat, that her women must have been three hours about it. She walked as one who is wont to ride in a litter. One of her pages, vastly well-armed, was in attendance. 'Twas plain to behold that she was the mistress of some high born seigneur, or perchance a lady of the Court, for she lifted her petticoat and gently shook her rump like a lady of exalted rank. But lady or light o' love, Jacques de Beaune, so far from feeling anxious, determined to attach himself to her or perish in the attempt. With this in mind, he resolved to pursue her, to wit, to find out whither she would lead him, to Heaven or to the pit of Hell, to the gallows or to love's retreat; anything to light the deeps of his despair with a ray of hope. The lady continued her walk along the banks of the Loire, down stream toward Plessis, sniffing, like a carp, the beautiful freshness of the water, dallying, playing, and sporting and tripping about like a mouseling who needs must see and taste everything.

When the page perceived that Jacques de Beaune thus persistently followed the lady's every movement (staying his step whene'er she stopped, and feasting his eyes shamelessly upon her, as one who had a right to do so) he turned of a sudden showing an impatient and arrogant countenance, like a dog who would say, "Back,



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Messieurs!" But the bold Tourainian had nimble wits. Thinking that if a cat may look at a king unrebuked, a Christian might be suffered to look upon a lady's pussy; he went a few paces forward, in a pretence of smiling at the page, with an air of dignity, past the lady and back again, who, for her part, spoke no word, but amused herself by gazing at the sky which was already donning its starry nightcap. And so it went on. Eventually, when she was come to Portillon, she stayed her steps; and that she might see the more clearly, threw back her veil over her shoulder, and in so doing flung her companion an approving glance to see if she were in any peril of being robbed. The truth was that tho' Jacques de Beaune was equal to performing the duties of three husbands, so also was he able to walk side by side with a princess without bringing shame upon her, having a bold and resolute air which, in good sooth, is very pleasing to the ladies; and if, perchance, he was a little sunburned by reason of his open air life, he would speedily grow whiter behind the curtains of a bed.

That needle-like glance, which the lady shot at him, was keener, he thought, than that with which she was wont to honour her prayer-book. Whereupon he did found the hope of a very escheat of love, and resolved to pursue this adventure even into the borders of the petticoat, risking, in order to get still further, not indeed his life, for of that he recked little, but his two ears and something else besides.

So the gentleman followed the lady into the town. She took the rue des Trois Pucelles and led the gallant



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through a maze of little alley-ways as far as the Square where to-day is situated the Hotel de la Crouzille. There she stayed her steps at the porch of a fine house, and the page knocked at the door. One of her servants came to open it and, the lady having passed within, shut the door, leaving the Sieur de Beaune staring open-mouthed, panting, and looking as big a fool as Saint Denys before he contrived to pick up his head. He lifted up his nose into the air to see if a drop of the lady's favour would descend upon him, and saw nought save a light which mounted the stairs, passed rapidly from room to room, and finally came to a halt behind a fine window where, he took it, the lady was bound to be. As you may well imagine, the poor lover stood there plunged in thoughtful melancholy, not having a notion what to do. Suddenly the window creaked and grunted and interrupted his dreaming. Then thinking his lady was going to hail him, he again lifted up his nose, and had it not been for the sill of the aforesaid window, which saved him, after the fashion of a hood, he would have received a plentiful douche of cold water together with the vessel that contained it, for the handle of it was left in the hands of the person who was fain to put a damper on our lover's enthusiasm. Jacques de Beaune, thankful for his escape, lost not the opportunity, and flung himself down beside the wall calling out in faint and quavering tones, "I am dying!" Then he stretched out all his limbs and lay like a dead man, awaiting what should happen next. Down came the servants in great perturbation and in great fear of the lady, to whom they confessed what they had

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done; and opening the door, hoisted the injured man upon their shoulders, who nearly burst out laughing as he felt himself being carried upstairs.

"He is cold," said the page.

"He's got a deal of blood," said the butler, fingering him about, and dabbing his hands about his drenched clothes.

"If he comes to, I'll found a Mass to Saint Gatien," cried the culprit in tears.

"Madame takes after her deceased father, and if she doesn't make you swing for it, the very least you will get will be to be kicked out of her house and service," said another. "Yes, certes, he's dead right enough. He weighs so heavy!"

"Ah, I must have come to some great lady's house!" thought Jacques.

"Does he smell like a dead man?" asked the author of the mischief.

Then, as with a mighty effort they hoisted the gentleman from Tours along, the doublet of the latter caught on a knob of the balusters.

"There goes my doublet!" said the dead man.

"Ah, he groaned!" said the culprit, heaving a sigh of joy.

The servants of the Queen Regent—for 'twas the house of the daughter of the late King Louis the Eleventh of virtuous memory—the servants, I say, took Jacques de Beaune into the hall and laid him stiff and stark on the table, never thinking that he could recover.

"Hie ye and bring a skilled surgeon," cried Ma-

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dame de Beaujeu; "scour the city, North and South and East and West."

Ere you could say *Pater*, all her folk had shot down the stairs. Then the good Regent sent her women for ointment, bandages to bind up the wounds, for medicated water, and for such a variety of things, that she was left all by herself. Then, gazing on the fine fellow that lay in a swoon before her, she said aloud as she noted his stalwart form and lordly mien, albeit he was no more:

"Ha, God means to punish me! Now when, for the first little time in my life, an evil desire hath stirred in the depths of my being and hath bewitched me, my blessed portion is wroth and deprives me of the prettiest young gentleman that ever I clapped eyes upon! Zounds, by the soul of my father, I will hang every man that had a hand in his undoing!"

"Madame," said Jacques de Beaune, leaping up from the wooden stretcher whereon he lay, at the Queen's feet, "I live to do you service, and so far am I from being undone that, for this very night, I promise you as many joys as there be months in the year, wherein I model myself on Hercules, that paynim lord. For twenty days past," continued the doughty gentleman, deeming that a lie or so would not be out of season to gain his end, "I wot not how many times I have encountered you; I love you madly, yet dared I not, because of my great respect for your person, draw nigh unto you. But you may divine how intoxicated I am with your royal beauty, to have invented such a trick as this whereto I

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owe the felicity of lying here at your feet." So saying, he showered warm kisses on those same feet, and gazed upon the fair lady with an expression that would have played havoc with any heart. Now the Lady Regent, owing to the flight of time, which is no respecter even of queens, had arrived, as everybody knows, at the period of woman's second blooming, and in this critical and trying season, women, however sober and inaccessible they may have been in the past, hanker after and seek out here, there and everywhere, unbeknown of all save God, for a night of Love, in order that they may not go forth into the other world with hands, heart and everything empty, for lack of having made acquaintance with that special thing you wot of. Therefore my lady of Beaujeu, displaying no astonishment at hearing the young man's promise—for royal personages are, of course, accustomed to taking all things by the dozen—kept this ambitious utterance stored in her brain or in her register of love, which grew right merry at the prospect it announced. Then she raised up the young man of Tours, who, despite his wretched plight, summoned up sufficient courage to smile at his mistress. She had all the majesty of an old rose, ears like the sole of a slipper, and a complexion like a sick cat, but so daintily attired, so fair in figure, so royal a foot and so lively about the hips, that he might well look to find, in his evil chance, some secret springs that would help him to conjugate the verb he had pronounced.

"Who are you?" said the great lady, taking on the grim expression of the late King.







## HOW THE CHÂTEAU D'AZAY CAME TO BE BUILT

"I am your most faithful subject, Jacques de Beaune, the son of your silversmith, who hath fallen into disfavour despite his loyal services."

"Well then," said the lady, "lay thee down again on thy stretcher. I hear them coming, and it were not meet that the people of my household should suspect me of being your accomplice in this piece of mummery!"

The young man perceived, from the tone of her voice, that the good lady graciously pardoned him for his temerity in loving her. Then he lay him down again, and reminded himself that some lords had got to Court by putting on an old spur, a reflection that quite restored his peace of mind.

"All is well!" said the Regent to her serving women. "None of these things are wanted. The gentleman is better. Thanks be to God and the Holy Virgin, no murder has been committed in my house!"

So saying she passed her fingers through the hair of her lover—her lover who, in such timely fashion, had dropped into her arms from heaven. Then, taking the *sal volatile*, she rubbed some on his temples, undid his doublet, and on the pretext of taking care of the patient, satisfied herself, more thoroughly than a notary making an inventory, how soft and youthful was the skin of this youngster so free in his promises of pleasure. And at the sight, everyone present, both men and women, stood amazed that the Regent should so comport herself. But never did a kind action misbecome a royal personage. Jacques stood up, pulled himself together, proffered the Queen his most humble thanks, and dismissed the phy-

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sician, master surgeon, and other black robed devils, saying he was quite himself again. Then he made known his name and endeavoured to withdraw, making a low bow to Madame de Beaujeu, as though he were in awe of her by reason of his father's disgrace, but in reality because of the terrible promise he had made to her.

"Nay, but I could not allow you to go thus!" said she. "The people who come to my house should not receive what you have received. The Sieur de Beaune will take supper here," she said, turning to her butler. "And now, he, who ignobly assaulted this gentleman, shall be at his discretion to punish as he will, if he reveals himself forthwith. If not, my house-steward shall seek him out and deal with him as he deserves."

Hearing her speak thus, the page, who had accompanied the lady on her walk, came forward.

"Madame," said Jacques, "suffer me to intercede for him. Grant him pardon, aye, and a reward to boot; for to him I owe the bliss of looking upon you with these eyes, the favour of supping in your company, and perchance the happiness of restoring my father to the office with which it pleased your glorious Sire to invest him."

"Thou sayest well," answered the Regent. "D'Estouteville," she said, turning to the page, "I will give thee a company of Archers. But, in future, throw nothing forth from the windows."

Then the Regent, mightily smitten with the Sieur de Beaune, held forth her hand and conducted him right courteously into her chamber, where they passed the time pleasantly, waiting till the supper should be served.

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And the Sieur Jacques made good use of his time, making out a good case for his father, and establishing himself firmly in the good graces of his hostess who, as everyone is aware, followed closely in her father's footsteps and did everything on the spur of the moment. Now, Jacques de Beaune began to reflect that it would be a very difficult matter for him to sleep with the Regent; for business of that kind was not done after the fashion of a cat's wedding when there's always a gutter on the roof where they can go and celebrate their nuptials in comfort. Therefore he was glad that the Regent should be aware of his identity without his being obliged to deal her out that infernal dozen, seeing that, for that purpose, all her servants and attendants would need to be out of the way, so that her honour should in no wise be attainted.

Nathless, remembering how resourceful the lady was, he would sometimes grow apprehensive and say to himself, "But should I have the wherewithal to do it?" But all the while she was speaking, the lady's thoughts were running on the same theme. She had managed scores of other affairs hardly less difficult, and she began to lay her plans with great skill. She sent for one of her secretaries, a man supremely well qualified to assist in the perfect government of the state, and ordered him to hand her with a great air of secrecy, a bogus message, during supper. And now the meal was ready; but the lady did not touch a morsel, for her heart was swollen like a sponge and her stomach taut and contracted, for all her thoughts were dwelling on this delectable

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young man, and she had no appetite save for him. Jacques, for divers reasons, did full justice to the meal. The messenger came as appointed; the Regent began to fume and fret, frowning even as the late King would have frowned. "Are we never going to have any peace in this Kingdom? 'Sblood, can we never have a quiet evening to ourselves?" Then uprose the Regent on her feet, and began striding up and down the room, shouting out, "Ho, there! My horse! Where is Monsieur de Vieilleville, my squire? Ah, no; of course; he is in Picardy. D'Estouteville, you must follow me with my household and join me at the Château d'Amboise." Then turning to her Jacques, she said, "You shall be my squire, Sieur de Beaune. You are fain to serve the King. Well, then, here is your opportunity! Pasques Dieu, come along! There are rebels to be put down and I have need of trusty henchmen."

Then, in about as long as it would have taken a hoary beggar to say a hundred *Aves*, horses were bridled, saddled, and all ready to start. Madame was perched up on her steed with de Beaune alongside of her, the men-at-arms behind them. To cut a long story short, the Sieur de Beaune found himself quartered just a yard or two away from Madame de Beaujeu, quite out of range of the spies. The Courtiers and all the folk were much amazed, and fell to wondering and discussing from what quarter the enemy would appear. Not so our dozen-promising young gentleman. He knew where he was right enough. The virtuous reputation of the Regent, which was unquestioned throughout the Kingdom, ren-



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dered her immune from all suspicion, for she was held to be as impregnable as the Château de Peronne. At the hour of curfew, when everything was shut, ears as well as eyes, and the château perfectly still, Madame de Beaujeu dismissed her woman and sent for her squire. And in the squire came. Then the lady and her adventurous knight ensconced themselves under the mantle of a lofty chimney, nestling close together on a seat well padded with velvet. And forthwith the Regent enquired of him, in honeyed tones of anxious curiosity, whether he was still suffering from his injury.

"It was right ill of me," she said, "to have compelled a loyal servant but lately injured by one of my people, to ride these twelve long miles. But so troubled was I that I could not go to bed ere I had seen you. You are sure you suffer not?"

"With nought save impatience!" answered the gentleman of the dozen, deeming that it would look ill to shew himself backward in such a case. "Rejoiced am I to see, my fair and noble mistress," he went on, "that your servant hath found favour in your eyes."

"But come now," she said, "were you not drawing the long-bow a little when you told me . . ."

"What?" he gasped.

"Why, that you had followed me a dozen times when I attended church and other places, in person!"

"Of a surety, I was not!"

"Then," answered the Regent, "I am amazed that, until to-day, I never set eyes upon a doughty young man whose courage is so unmistakably engraved upon

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his features. I retract nothing of the things I said, when I deemed you fatally injured. You are pleasing to me, and I would fain befriend you!"

Then, the hour of the unspeakable sacrifice having sounded, Jacques threw himself at the Regent's knees, kissed her feet, her hands, her everything—at least so rumour hath it. Then what time he was kissing her and performing all his preliminaries, he proved by many an argument brought to bear on the well matured virtue of his sovereign, that a lady who wielded the sceptre of state had a perfect right to disport herself a little. But this right the Regent would by no means allow, for she held that she ought to be taken by force in order that the lover should bear the weight of the whole sin. Notwithstanding this, you may be sure that she was thoroughly well perfumed, decked out for the night, and all aglow with desire, the fire of which imparted a radiance which lent an added loveliness to her complexion. Despite a feeble resistance, she found herself borne away like a child to the royal couch, where the good lady and the youth of the twelvefold promise did embrace in glorious nuptials. There, from capers to gambols, from gambols to touselings, from touselings to ribaldries, and from—one thing to another, they went on with a will; yet the Regent declared that she had a stronger belief in the virginity of Queen Marie than she had in the fulfilment of the promised dozen. Now it chanced curiously enough that Jacques de Beaune perceived no sign of the encroachments of age in this great lady beneath the coverlet, for 'tis true that all things undergo



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a strange metamorphosis in the glow of the lamp at night. Many a woman who looks fifty by daylight is but twenty at midnight; while others are twenty at noon and a hundred after Vespers. So Jacques, who was better pleased with this encounter than he would have been to fall in with the King, when his Majesty was out a-hunting for gallows's fodder, did repeat and ratify his wager. And Madame, amazed within her, did, on her side, promise to help him on, including in her benefits the lordship of Azay-le-Bruslé well and truly conveyed, wherewith she undertook to invest her cavalier, and the pardon of his father—if she did but prove the loser in the duel.

Then murmured the duteous son to himself:

"This time 'tis to save my father from the law! This time 'tis for the property! This time for the chief rents and timber rights! This, for the forest of Azay. *Item* for the fishing rights. Another one for the eyots of the Indre! Now then, we'll get the meadow-lands! Now we'll pay off the debts on our place at la Carte, which my father bought so dearly! And now for a comfortable job at Court!"

Having arrived at this stage without any great inconvenience, he deemed that the honour of his cod-piece was at stake and bethought him that, as he had the whole of France beneath him, the dignity of the Crown was also involved. To proceed, in return for a vow he made to his patron Saint Jacques to build him a chapel there at Azay, he presented his liege homage to the Regent in eleven periphrases, all of them clear, clean, limpid and well-minted.

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Now, as touching the last epilogue in this narrative of things below, the young gentleman of Touraine was daring enough to think he would bestow a lordly measure of delight upon the Regent by reserving for her, when she awoke, a right honest salutation and one which it should become him, as lord of Azay, to give his Sovereign Lady. 'Twas a right sound idea. But, alas, when Nature goes lame, she behaves like a very jade—lies down and would rather die under the lash than budge an inch, and continues to lie low till it pleases her to get up with her magazines replenished. When, therefore, morning came and the young falcon of Castle Azay was fain to salute the daughter of King Louis the Eleventh, he was compelled, despite his best intent, to salute her even as sovereigns salute each other, that is to say, with nothing more than a salvo of powder. So the Regent, when she had quitted the roost and was taking her breakfast with Jacques, did formally notify the shortcoming and lodge objection to her squire, stating that not having won his wager, he had no claim to the lordship of Azay.

“Ventre Saint Paterne! But I came very near it!” exclaimed Jacques de Beaune. “But, my dear Lady and noble Sovereign, it becomes neither you nor me to be judge in our own case. The case in question, being of an allodial nature, should be brought before your Council, seeing that the fief of Azay is held of the Crown.”

“Pasques Dieu!” retorted the Regent, laughing—a thing she did but rarely—“I will hand over to you the duties of Monsieur de Vieilleville in my house, abstain

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from prosecuting your father, make you a present of Azay, and thrust you into a royal appointment, if, without compromising my honour, you are able to lay the question before the full Council. If, however, by a single word, you chance to besmirch my stainless reputation, I . . .”

“May I swing for it, if I do!” exclaimed our twelve-fold hero, turning the thing to a jest; for he noticed a trace of anger in Madame de Beaujeu’s countenance.

And, indeed, the daughter of Louis the Eleventh was now more deeply concerned about her royal reputation than about the dozen pranks she had played, the which she made out to be of no account, for, thinking that this excellent night’s entertainment was going to cost her nothing, she preferred to talk of the thing rather than to accept another dozen which the young man, in all good faith, offered to bestow upon her.

“Then, my Lady, ”said her loyal henchman, “I shall, at any rate, be your squire. . . .”

Some of the captains, secretaries and other folk holding office under the Regency were astonished at Madame de Beaujeu’s sudden departure, and hearing of the perturbation she had manifested, hurried to the Château d’Amboise, eager to learn the origin of the tumult. All these gentlemen were holding themselves ready to deliberate in Council on the matter as soon as the Queen should rise. She, indeed, did herself convene them in order to avoid any suspicion of having cozened them, and she gave them a few nuts to crack, which they cracked most sapiently. And at the end of the sitting,

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the new squire appeared on the scene to act as escort to the noble Lady. When he saw all the Councillors on their feet, the bold Tourainian asked them to solve a knotty legal problem which affected him and the King's estates.

"Give heed to him," said the Regent. "He speaks the truth."

Whereupon Jacques de Beaune, in no wise daunted at the majestic trappings of this High Court of Justice, spake as followeth, or as near as may be:

"Noble lords, I pray you, albeit I shall speak to you but of such trifling things as nutshells, to pay strict attention to this case, and to pardon the seeming frivolity of my language. A certain lord, who was walking in an orchard with another lord, did espy a fine walnut tree, well planted, well grown, good to look upon, and good to keep, albeit a trifle hollow. But 'twas a tree still fresh and of pleasant smell; a tree whereof you would never have grown weary had you chanced to see it; 'twas a tree of Love that looked like the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil whose fruit the Lord hath forbidden us to taste, and because of which our Mother Eve and her spouse were sent forth into the wilderness. Now, my Lords, this tree was the subject of a piece of harmless contention between the two lords; one of those merry wagers which friends are in the habit of making among themselves. The younger of the two boasted that he would cast twelve times through this leafy tree a stick which, at the moment, he had in his hand, even as anyone of us might happen to have in his when taking



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a walk in his orchard, and he said that at each throw he would bring down a nut. Is not this the crux of the business?" asked Jacques, with a little glance at the Regent.

"Yes, gentlemen, it is so!" she replied, astonished at her squire's address.

"The other party wagered the contrary," went on the pleader. "But behold! My brave challenger threw his stick with such skill and courage, aye, so well and so prettily, that it was a pleasure to both of them. And it befell that, because he was holpen by the saints who, without doubt, took pleasure in looking on at the game, there fell a nut at each stroke; and in very truth, there were twelve of them. But it happened by chance that the last of the nuts to fall was hollow and contained no nutritive pulp of a nature to produce another tree, if the gardener had taken it into his head to plant it in the soil. Now then, did the man with the stick win his wager? I have spoken. Pronounce your judgment!"

"The case is clear," said Messire Adam Fumée of Touraine, who at that time was Keeper of the Seals. "There is only one thing for his adversary to do!"

"What is that?" asked the Regent.

"Pay!" was the answer.

"He's too subtle!" said she, giving her squire a tap on the cheek. "He'll be hanged one of these days!"

She spoke in jest; but she had drawn the silversmith's true horoscope; for he fell from the royal favour and found himself on the gallows as the result of another old woman's vengeance and the glaring treason of a



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man of Ballan, his secretary, whose fortune he had made and whose name was Prévost and not René Gentil, as he has most erroneously been called. This traitor and false steward, so they say, handed over to Madame d'Angoulême the receipt for the money paid him by Jacques de Beaune, who was by this time Baron of Semblançay, Lord of la Carte and Azay, and one of the most powerful nobles in the realm. Of his two sons, one became Archbishop of Tours, and the other Lord of the Treasury and Governor of Touraine. But that is another story.

But to revert to our story of this worthy's youth—Madame de Beaujeu, who had met her beau a little late in life, was highly gratified at discovering such lofty wisdom and such a masterly grasp of public affairs in her chance lover, that she entrusted him with the care of the King's purse, in which office he was so successful and multiplied by twelve with such remarkable skill, that the day came when his high reputation brought him to the Treasury, of which he became Superintendent, and which he did ably administer not without advantage to himself, which was only just. Madame la Régente paid the wager and had the lordship of Azay-le-Bruslé duly transferred to the squire, the castle of which had, as everybody knows, been battered to pieces by the first bombardiers that came to Touraine. And for this miraculous demolition, the said engineers would have been condemned by the ecclesiastical tribunal of the chapter as evildoers and heretics had it not been for the intervention of the King.

At this time there was built, under the direction of

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Messire Bohier, Controller of Finance, the Château of Chenonceaux which, as a piece of quaintness and curiosity, had its château astride across the River Cher.

Now, the Baron de Semblançay, wishing to go one better than the aforesaid Bohier, made it his boast that he would build his castle in the depths of the River Indre, and there it still stands, the jewel of this fair green valley, so firm were the piles on which it was established. And on this work, Jacques de Beaune expended thirty thousand crowns, to say nothing of the labours of his folk. Now you may take it for sure that this château is one of the finest, fairest, most gracious and delicious, and most elaborately conceived of all the châteaux of our beautiful Touraine; and it still bathes itself in the waters of the Indre like a royal beauty, gaily bedecked with pavilions and windows of lacelike tracery, with fighting men for weather-vanes, which turn about whichever way the wind blows, as mercenaries are wont to do. But the worthy Semblançay was hanged ere ever he could finish it; and since his day, there has been found no one sufficiently furnished with gold to bring it to completion. Nathless, his Master, King Francis, the first of that name, had been his guest there, and the royal bedchamber is still pointed out to visitors. When the King retired to bed, Semblançay, whom his Majesty called "daddy" in honour of his white hair, on hearing his Master, to whom he was so devoted, say, "Your clock has just struck twelve, daddy," replied, "Ah, Sire, to twelve strokes of a hammer that's now grown very old, but well and truly delivered at this hour

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on a day long ago, I owe my lordship, the money I have spent thereon and the favour of serving you. . . .”

The King was fain to know what meaning lay hidden beneath these cryptic words.

So what time the King was making himself comfortable in his bed, Jacques de Beaune narrated to him the tale that you wot of. Francis the First, who well loved a naughty story, considered the anecdote a right droll one, and was the more diverted thereby in that his mother, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, though then past the climacteric, was running after the Constable de Bourbon in order to win from him a few such dozens. 'Twas a wicked woman's wicked passion, for because of it the safety of the realm was imperilled, the King was taken prisoner, and poor Semblançay put to death, as hath been hereinbefore recited.

I have been at pains thus to set down how the Château d'Azay came to be built, in order that I might put on record in what manner Semblançay's fortune was founded, who did much for his native town, which he adorned. Thus he spent notable sums on finishing the towers of the Cathedral. Our story is told by father to son, and by one noble to another in the said Azay-le-Rideau, where the tale still frisks it beneath the royal bed-trappings which have been strangely preserved to this day. Wherefore the story is as false as false can be that would ascribe the Tourainian's dozen to some German knight who, by this means, is said to have won the Austrian land for the House of Hapsburg. The author, our contemporary, who hath set this story current,

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learned though he be, has suffered himself to be misled by some erroneous chroniclers; for the Chancellery of the Roman Empire makes no mention of any such mode of acquisition. It offends me that he should have thought that a codpiece nourished on beer could possibly have furnished, could even have risen to the alchemic prowess of the codpieces of Chinon whereof our Master Rabelais thought so highly. And now, for the benefit of the country, the glory of Azay, the conscience of the Château, the renown of the House of Beaune, whence issued the Sauves and the Noirmoustiers, I have reëstablished the facts in all their veritable, historical and wondrous beauty. If any ladies should come to visit the château, they will still find that there are some *dozens* to be found in the neighbourhood, but they are only to be had retail.





## THE SHAM COURTESAN



T

HERE be but few who know the truth concerning the death of the Duke of Orleans, brother of King Charles VI—a death which issued from a goodly number of causes, one of which will be the subject of this narrative. Without doubt, this prince was the greatest profligate of all the royal line of Monseigneur St. Louis (who was, while he lived, King of France) without setting aside some of the most corrupt of all the notorious family which was so much in accordance with the vices and particular qualities of our gay and jovial people, that thou mightest more easily picture to thyself a Hell without Satan than our France without her right merry, brilliant and bawdy kings. Thou mayst laugh as much at those bum-bailiffs, who will tell thee our forefathers were much better in philosophy, as at the good old out-of-date philanthropists who will pretend that mankind is journeying towards perfection.

They are all miserable blind worms seeing neither the feathers of the oysters nor the shells of the birds, which change no more than we shall change our naughty ways. Hey then! Make merry while youth lasts; wet your gullets and dry your tears, sith one ounce of merriment outweighs a hundredweight of melancholy.

The debaucheries of the prince—lover of Queen Isa-

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bella, of whom he was excessively fond—created many pleasant adventures; well equipped was he with many a good point of an alcibiadesque nature; a true son of his father, certes! He it was who first conceived the notion of having relays of wenches of all sorts, so that in his journeyings from Paris to Bordeaux, he could at all times be sure of finding a good meal and a bed daintily furnished inside and out with frills. Happy prince! who died astride his steed—for astride he always was, in open warfare and even between the sheets.

Of all his merry pranks, our most excellent King Louis XI has given an account in that book *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, written under his personal supervision during his exile at the Court of Burgundy, where, during the evenings, he and his cousin Charolois, to while away the time, would recount to one another all the good stories they could think on; and when they had made an end of the true ones, each of their courtiers did outvie the one with the other in inventing new. But out of respect for the royal blood, the Dauphin has ascribed the adventure which befell the Lady of Cany to a citizen and called it *The Medal Upside Down*. This story, which commences the *Hundred Tales* and is one of the brightest jewels thereof, is open for anyone to read.

Here is my story:

The Duke of Orleans had among his suite a lad of the province of Picardy, named Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who had taken to wife, for his future *malaise*, a young lady, rich in lands, allied to the House of Burgundy. An exception to most heiresses, she was of such surpassing

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beauty, that when she appeared all the ladies of the Court, even the Queen and Madame Valentine, were thrown completely in the shade.

Nathless this was as naught compared with the exalted rank, the wealth, beauty and sweet temper of the lady of d'Hocquetonville, for these rare advantages received a pious reflection from her supreme innocence, charming modesty, and chaste upbringing.

It was not long before the Duke, drinking in the perfume of this heavenly flower, was smitten with a veritable fever of love. Melancholy claimed him for her own: he forsook his naughty ways, and regretfully and only from time to time, did he nibble at that royal dainty morsel—his German Isabella. Then he raged and swore that by sorcery, by force, by trickery or by her own free will, he would possess this gracious lady; she, who by the vision of her dainty body, drove him to distraction during nights which had now become so long and wearisome. At first, did he urge her with golden words, but he soon realised by the aloof way in which she conducted herself, that she intended to hold fast her chastity, seeing that she replied to him without astonishment at the thing he proposed and without flying into a temper as some other ladies would in like extremity. “My lord, I must tell you that I do not intend to burden myself with an intrigue—not that I despise the joys which one may find therein, for I realise how intense they must be, since for them so great a number of ladies will jeopardise their homes, honour, future and all. But from the love I have for my children, never shall my



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conduct cause the blush of shame to crimson my cheeks; then I can teach my daughters that in virtue alone lies the secret of true happiness. In faith, my lord, since we have more days of old age than of youth, of those it behooves us to think. From those who watched over my childhood, I have learned what is of true worth in this life; (I know that all else is built upon sand, save the stronghold of our natural affections). Also I desire the esteem of all, and especially that of my husband, who is dearer to me than the whole world. Therefore, I wish to appear honest in his eyes. I have spoken. And I beg you to let me go in peace about the affairs of my household; otherwise I shall refer, unhesitatingly, to my lord and master, who will instantly quit your service."

This noble answer so inflamed the King's brother, that he pondered how he might possess this gentle lady, dead or alive. He never doubted but that he would soon have her at his mercy, knowing well his dexterity at this most jovial pursuit of all where one, of necessity, uses the weapons of other sports, seeing that this pretty quarry is *shot down whilst in flight* by torchlight, by night, by day, in the town, in the country, in forests, at the water's edge, with nets, lacets, kestrels newly unhooded, with spear, with hunting horn, with gun shot, with bird-call, with fishing-net, with web, with trap, by scent, by decoy, in flight, with a limed twig, with enticing bait; in fact, with every ingenious snare since the fall of Adam, and may be destroyed in a thousand different ways but is usually trampled underfoot.

After a while, this crafty nobleman spake no more of

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his desires, and caused the Lady of d'Hocquetonville to be appointed a member of the Queen's household.

One day, when Queen Isabella had gone to Vincennes to see the King who was sick, she left him in control of the Hôtel de St. Paul. He ordered the cook to prepare him a royal feast and to serve it in the Queen's own apartments. Then sent he an express command unto his obdurate lady by one of the pages. The Countess d'Hocquetonville, supposing herself to be needed by Queen Isabella for the performance of one of her duties, or invited to some sudden escapade, hastened thither.

The cunning lover had taken such precautions that the gentle lady weened not of the Queen's departure, so she hurried to the beautiful apartment which, in the House of St. Paul, adjoins the Queen's bedchamber, and therein did she find the Duke of Orleans alone! Suspecting some plot, she hastened to the bedroom, found no sign of the Queen, but heard the prince laughing loudly.

"I am lost!" cried she, and would have made her escape, but the good petticoat hunter had posted his guards about the place, who, without knowing what was afoot, shut the house, barricaded the doors, so that the Lady of d'Hocquetonville was as completely cut off in this mansion, which was as large as a fourth part of Paris, as tho' she had been on a desert island, with no other succour than that of her patron saint and her God. Then realising the truth, the poor lady, trembling in every limb, sank into a chair, while the weaving of this cunning web was revealed to her, between bursts of laughter, by her lover. Then when the Duke attempted

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to approach her, this noble lady stood up, arming herself first of all with her tongue, and darting a thousand maledictions from her eyes, exclaimed—"Thou shalt possess me—but dead! Ha! my lord, force me not to a strife which is bound to become known. Let me go unmolested, and my lord d'Hocquetonville shall remain in ignorance of the cloud which thou hast caused to shadow my life for ever.

"Duke, thou hast looked too long into the eyes of women to have found time to study the faces of men, and thou dost not realise with whom thou hast to deal. The Sire d'Hocquetonville would give his life for thee, so closely is he bound to thee by the memory of thy manifold kindnesses to him, and also because he holds you in great affection. But as he loves so will he hate; and I trow he will dispatch thee, without a qualm, with one blow of his club upon thy pate, to wreak vengeance upon thee if thou dost force me to utter so much as one single cry.

"Dost thou seek both my death and thine own, oh wicked one? For as surely as I am an honest woman, I shall make no secret of whatsoever betides me, whether it be good or ill. Now, Sire, wilt thou release me?"

Whereupon the scoundrel commenced to whistle. Hearing this, the good lady hurried into the Queen's bedchamber and took from its hiding place a sharp dagger. Thus when the Duke followed to see what the flight portended, she cried, pointing to one of the planks in the floor, "If thou dost cross that line, I will kill myself!"







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The Duke, completely undismayed, took a chair, placed it on the very plank she had indicated, and commenced negotiations, hoping thus to work upon the emotions of this fearless woman, and bring her to the point when her head, her heart, and all the other things should give way before the enticing pictures which he drew for her.

Then he told her, with those charming flowers of speech which are the natural heritage of princes, that in the first place, virtuous ladies pay very dearly for their virtue, seeing that in order to attain a very uncertain felicity of the future, they lose all the delicious pleasures of the present, as their husbands were constrained, for reasons of conjugal policy, not to reveal to them all the delicate trimmings of the game of love, seeing that these joys which would play such havoc with their hearts, were so deliciously ardent, so thrilling to the senses, that a woman would thereafter know no peace in the chilly realms of domesticity; that this conjugal abomination was an iniquity, and that the very least a man should do in recognition of the prudence of a good wife and of her many virtues, was to stiffen himself, to wear himself out, to exterminate himself, if necessary, to give her pleasure in every possible way; billings and cooings, joustings, tiltings, and all other garnishings of the love feast; and that would she but taste a few of the heavenly delights of those pleasant little titillations hitherto unknown to her, she would judge the other things of life to be of no account, and if she so wished, he would be for ever as silent as the grave so

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that no scandal should befoul her fair name. The lecherous blade, perceiving that she stopped not her ears, began a description of numberless lascivious debaucheries after the fashion of the Arabian pictures then in much vogue.

Then with eyes aflame, countless fires burning in his words, music in his voice, he recalled with very evident pleasure the different tricks used by his *lady loves*, even naming them to Madame d'Hocquetonville, and recounting to her the Lesbian osculations, kittenish tricks and amorous cajoleries of the royal Isabella; and he was so gracefully eloquent, so ardently inciting, that he believed he saw the lady slackening her grip of the poignard, and made as if to approach her. But she, ashamed of being caught a'day-dreaming, looked haughtily at this devilish monster, who thus tempted her, and said to him: "Good sir, I thank thee; thou hast but made me love my dear husband the more, since from what thou hast told me, I realise that he so much reverences me that he would not dishonour his nuptial couch by the wallowing of drabs and wantons. I should feel myself shamed and contaminated for all eternity if I so much as put my feet in those quagmires where go those shameless wenches. The wife of a man is one thing—his light o'love another."

"I will wager," said the Duke, with a smile, "that henceforward e'er long, thou wilt be pricking on the Sire d'Hocquetonville to a swifter pace."

At this, the gentle lady shuddered and cried, "Thou art a wicked monster! I despise and loathe thee! What,

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unable to rob me of my chastity, thou dost seek to corrupt my soul! Aha! my lord, in truth, thou shalt be made to suffer for this!

‘If I forgot

Yet God would not’

Wast not thou the writer of these lines?”

“Madame,” said the Duke, reddening angrily, “I will have thee bound!”

“Not so!” she replied, flourishing her dagger; “for I am able to liberate myself!”

The minion smiled.

“Nathless,” said he, “I know a way of thrusting thee into the filthy mire of these shameless drabs whom thou dost so disdain!”

“Never while I live!”

“Headlong shalt thou go!” replied he; “thy two feet, thy two hands and thy two little white breasts and thy two snow-white cushions, thy teeth, hair and all! What is more, thou wilt go willingly, lecherously, bruising thy ride as a maddened mare who breaks her crupper pawing the ground, cavorting and expelling postern petards. I swear it by St. Castus!”

He then whistled for a page and secretly commanded him to seek out the Sire d’Hocquetonville, Savoisy, Tanneguy, Cyprien, and other roystering coystrels of his suite, bidding them to a supper, not forgetting to invite also a pretty shift or two, ripe, juicy and fit for business.

Then sat he down in his chair once more, ten paces from the lady, from whom he had never once removed his eyes, while whispering his orders to the page.

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"Raoul is jealous," said he; "let me give you some good advice. Here," he continued, indicating a secret place, "are the Queen's quintessential oils and perfumes. In this other little chamber, she makes her toilet and performs those dainty rites known to ladies alone. I know from considerable experience that each one of your charming set has her own especial perfume by which she may be recognised. So if Raoul is, as you say, madly jealous in the worst possible way, you will use these harlots' perfumes."

"Ah, my lord, what tale is this thou tellest?"

"Thou shalt know when thou shalt know! I wish thee no ill; and thou hast my word of honour as a nobleman that I will respect thee always and will conceal for ever my mortification at my defeat. Briefly, thou shalt know that the Duke of Orleans hath a good heart and most nobly takes his toll of scornful ladies by putting into their hands the keys of Paradise. Hide thyself and tune thine ears to the merry words each man will bandy with his neighbour. But above all things, see that thou dost not cough as thou lov'st thy children."

Seeing that there was no other way out of the royal bed-chamber, and that across the bay there was scarcely space enough to thrust one's hand, the cunning fellow shut the door of that room, sure of thus keeping the lady a captive there, and again commanded her to hold her peace.

Thither came our merry bawcocks in great haste, and found awaiting them a right good and sumptuous feast, calling welcome to them from silver trenchers upon the

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table, which was beautifully garnished and well lighted with delicate silver flagons and cups abrim with royal wine.

Thus their master spake, saying: "Come now, fall to, my jolly cockbirds. I am aweary of waiting for thee. For thy pleasure I wished to make in thy good company a merry feast in the good old style as when the Greeks and Romans said their Paternoster to Messire Priapus and to that horned god known everywhere as Bacchus. The feast will be truly orgiastic, since we have gotten some pretty little crows with three beaks, of which I know, from the long experience I have of them, the best one to peck at."

Recognizing him as their master in all things, they truly relished this gay discourse, with the exception of Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who advanced towards the prince saying:

"Good my lord, thou hast my loyal support in any battle but that of the petticoat warfare; in hand to hand fighting, but not that of the wine bottle. My good comrades here have not left wives at home as I have. I have a sweet lady to whom I owe my company and an account of all my doings."

"Then since I too am married, am I also in the wrong?" asked the Duke.

"No, my dear Master, you are a prince and can do as you will."

These noble words so rejoiced the heart of the imprisoned lady that she glowed and cooled by turns.

"Ah, my Raoul!" murmured she, "thou art indeed a good husband!"



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"Thou art a man after mine own heart," replied the Duke; "and I know thee to be the most loyal and worthy of all my servants. You others," said he, looking at the three lords, "are but sorry scamps! But Raoul," he continued, "sit down. When the linnets come—and they are linnets of high estate—you shall go home. By God, I had treated thee as a virtuous man to whom the delicious sweets of illicit love were unknown, and I had thoughtfully provided for thee, in that chamber, a veritable queen of Lesbians, a pretty little devil in whom dwells every feminine artifice. I wished, for once in thy life, that thou who hast never tasted the sauces of love, and whose only dreams were of warfare, shouldst have all the pretty little kickshaws of the love game revealed to thee, since it is unthinkable that one of my adherents should serve his sweet lady so ill."

At these words, d'Hocquetonville seated himself at the table to comply with the Duke's wishes as far as his conscience would allow him. Thereupon all was laughter and roystering, feasting, and discussion of the ladies in question. They began to tell of their various intrigues, amorous assignations, sparing no women save the virtuous ones, exposing each other's particular foibles, followed by horrible little confidences which increased in treachery and lewdness as the wine dwindled in their cups.

The Duke, gay, as if he were heir to the Universe, pricked on his companions, inventing lies himself in order to draw the truth from them; the guests trotted through the food and galloped through the wine, and kept the ball of their jollity a'rolling.

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Now, what with listening to them and becoming inflamed with wine, the Sire d'Hocquetonville began to relax by degrees from his restraint. In spite of his virtues, he gave rein to these desires and wallowed in the mire of these impurities even as a saint who beshits himself at his orisons.

Seeing which, the prince all aflame to feed the fires of his spleen and distemper, said in a jesting manner: "Ha! by St. Castus! Raoul, we are cockbirds from the same dunghill, sure enough—discreet as may be when parted from the joys of Bacchus! Go! We will say not a word of this to Madame. And by God's body! I do wish thou mayst be acquainted with the pleasures of Paradise. Here," said he, with a tap on the door of the room where Madame d'Hocquetonville lay hid, "here is a lady of the Court and friend to the Queen, but is also the most marvellous high priestess of Venus, unrivalled by any other courtesan, whore, drab, trull, or any other malapert of the town. . . . She was conceived at such time when Heaven was rejoicing, when Nature was fulfilling herself, when the lands were performing their Hymeneal rites, when the very beasts in rut were neighing and winnying, and everything was aflame with love. Altho' this woman would make an altar of her bed, she is nathless too great a lady to permit herself to be seen and too well known to utter any words save the little cries of love. But you will need no light since her eyes dart flames; and you will have no need for speech, seeing that she will say all that is necessary with her writhings and sinuous twistings swifter than the startled fawn

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beneath the trees. Only, my good Raoul, with so spirited a mount, see that thou cling fast to her mane and straddle her featly, and keep on thy perch or with one jerk she would toss thee to the ceiling, and even if your spine were weighted with lead. She is always in high feather, always aflame and always craving for a man. Our poor friend, now defunct, the young Sire de Giac owed his death to her; she sucked his marrow dry in one brief springtide. 'S light! To join in such a celebration as that of which she rings the bells and lights the torches, a man would willingly forfeit a third of his future bliss; and he, who has once tasted her, would for a second night barter his hopes of eternity without regret."

"But," said Raoul, "in things like these which are naturally very much alike, how can there be so great a difference?"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Here the merry coystrels shouted with laughter.

Then, lively with wine, and at a wink from their leader, they commenced telling a thousand spicy quirks, and saucy tales, brawling, shouting, quaffing and hiccuping.

Now not knowing that an innocent was there, these roysterers who had long before drowned all sense of shame in the wine-flagons, mentioned things calculated to bring a blush to the cheeks of the figures carved on the chimney-piece, walls and ceilings. Then the Duke capped all these bawdy jests, saying that the lady who was in bed in the next room awaiting a lover, should be proclaimed Empress of these debaucheries, as she rehearsed them every night with Hell's own warmth.







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Whereupon, the cups being drained, the Duke pushed Raoul, who went not unwillingly, into the room, by this means compelling the lady to be stabbed by one dagger or the other. About midnight, the Sire d'Hocquetonville came joyfully forth, not without remorse at having played his wife false. Then the Duke of Orleans let Madame d'Hocquetonville out by a garden door, so that she arrived home before her husband.

"This," she murmured in the prince's ear, as she went out, "will cost us all exceeding dear."

A year later, in the old rue du Temple, Raoul d'Hocquetonville, who had exchanged the service of the Duke for that of Jehan of Burgundy, first killed, with one blow of his axe, the king's brother—being broken-hearted as everyone knows. In the same year the lady d'Hocquetonville died, having withered like a flower without air, or cankered by the worm. Her husband had had her marble tomb erected in one of the cloisters of Péronne, whereon the following words were engraved:

Here lies

BERTHE de BOURGOGNE

noble and gentle lady

of

RAOUL, SIRE d'HOCQUETONVILLE

Alas! Pray not for her soul

She

has flowered anew in Paradise

The eleventh day of January

In the year of our Lord MCCCCVIII

In her Twenty-Second Year.

Leaving two Sons and her Husband

plunged in grief.

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Writ in choice Latin; but for the convenience of all, it was thought necessary to render it into French, albeit the word "gentle" is a poor substitute for *formosa* which signifies grace of form.

The Duke of Burgundy, known as "The Bold," who, before his death, confessed the troubles buried deep in his heart, would sometimes say, in spite of being hardened to such things, that this epitaph made him melancholy for a whole month. And that among the abominations wrought by his cousin of Orleans, there was one for which he would murder him again, if he had not been done to death already, for that this evil man had most villainously planted the seeds of vice in the divinest virtue in the world and prostituted two noble hearts, the one for the other; and so saying, he fell to thinking of the lady of d'Hocquetonville, whose portrait had in unseemly wise been placed in the cabinet wherein his cousin thrust the pictures of his women.

This adventure was so inexpressibly painful, that when it was recounted by the Comte de Charolois to the Dauphin (afterwards Louis XI) he would not allow his secretary to include it in his "Collection" out of regard for his great uncle, the Duke of Orleans, and for Dunois, the Duke's son and his old friend. But the memory of the Lady of d'Hocquetonville is so fragrantly virtuous and so sweetly melancholy, that on this account this will be forgiven, in spite of the devilish trick and vengeance of Monseigneur d'Orleans. The well deserved death of this knave has been the cause of many serious

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riots, which finally Louis XI, becoming impatient, quelled with blows of the battle-axe.

Wherefrom we learn that in all things you will find a woman, in France as elsewhere, and that sooner or later, we must pay for our follies.



# THE DANGER OF BEING TOO INNOCENT







Y LORD of Moncontour, that gallant soldier of Tours, who, in honour of the battle won by the Duke of Anjou, at this time our most noble King and governor, built at Vouvray the castle of that name, since he had right valiantly conducted himself in that affair, defeating the greatest of the heretics; and on that account was allowed to take the name—his captain, I say, had two sons, both good Catholics, of whom the elder was held in high favour at Court.

After the peace, which was made before the schemes evolved for St. Bartholomew's Day, the good man returned to his manor, which was not then adorned as it is now. On his arrival, he received the sad tidings of his son's death, caused by a duel with the Sire de Villequier. The poor father was all the more grieved by this, since he had arranged a highly satisfactory marriage between this son and a lady of the male branch of Amboise. Now by this most piteous and untimely death were swept away all the high hopes and future of his family, which he had hoped, by this marriage, to make into a great noble house.

Having this in mind, he had put his other son into a monastery, under the guidance and governance of a man far renowned for his exceeding piety, who educated

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the youth in a most Christian manner, according to the wishes of his father who greatly desired to make him a Cardinal of renown. To this end, the good abbot kept the young man apart, likewise did he put him to sleep in the same cell with himself, and allowed no foul weed to take root in his mind, training him in purity of thought and true humility as becomes a priest.

This clerk, at the age of nineteen, knew no other love than the love of God, no other desires than those of the angels, who are free from our carnal longings in order to live in greater purity; seeing that otherwise they would be in a position to make very good use of the same longing which is an ever present fear with the Lord on High who likes to have his pages spotless. He has done well, since those good little people of his cannot fuddle themselves in taverns, or frequent bawdy houses as ours can. He is perfectly served. But then, look you, he is All-powerful.

However, owing to this mischance, the lord of Moncontour made up his mind to take his younger son away from the monastery, and to array him in the purple robe of the soldier and courtier instead of in the ecclesiastical purple. He also intended to marry him to the maiden who had been betrothed to the dead man, which was a wise notion, for since the little priest was, in all ways, wrapped in the cotton wool of continence, the bride would be happier and better served than if she had married his brother, who had been tumbled, tumbled and well-worn by the ladies of the Court.

The befrocked one was very soon unfrocked, followed

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the sacred wishes of his father with the docility of a sheep, and consented to the marriage without knowing what a woman, nay, even stranger, what a wench of any kind was.

Peradventure, his progress having been impeded by the interruptions and movements of conflicting parties, this innocent, more innocent than it is meet for a man to be, did not reach the castle of Moncontour till the eve of the wedding, which was to be performed with dispensations especially sent from the Archbishopric of Tours.

It is fitting, at this point, to tell you somewhat of the bride. Her mother, who, for many years, had been a widow, lived in the house of Monsieur de Braguelongne, civil lieutenant of the Chastelet de Paris, whose wife lived with the Sieur de Lignières, creating much scandal at that time.

But everyone had too large a mote in his own eye to have the right to pluck the beam from the eye of his neighbour. Nowadays, in most families, the various members go their own road to perdition, without giving heed to their neighbours; one or two ambling along, others at a gentle trot, many at full gallop, and a few on foot, sith this road is down hill all the way. Thus the devil reaped a fat harvest since these little irregularities were considered modish.

Poor old Madame Virtue, in fear and trembling, had taken refuge, none knew where, but sometimes here, sometimes there, she was seen in the company of prudes.

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In the most noble house of Amboise, there still lived the dowager of Chaumont, an old lady of well-proven worth, who retained in her person all the traditions and breeding of this excellent family.

The lady had taken to her bosom, at the tender age of ten years, the little maid of whom this tale has to tell. The child never gave Madame d'Amboise a moment's anxiety, leaving her free to follow her own devices and coming to see her daughter once a year, when the Court chanced that way.

Although so lacking in a proper maternal instinct, Madame d'Amboise was invited to the wedding of her daughter, and also the *Sieur de Braguelongne*, by the gallant soldier, who knew his kinsfolk.

But the dear old Dowager was not able to come to Moncontour; for she could not get permission from her deplorable sciatica, her catarrh, nor from the condition of her legs, which no longer allowed her to frolic. This caused the good lady to shed many a bitter tear.

She was full of fears of the perils of Court life for her gentle little dove, pretty as pretty could be; but she was forced to let her fly away, promising that many masses and orisons should be said every day for her happiness. And it comforted her, not a little, to know that the prop of her old age was being given into the hands of such a saintly young man, led in the paths of virtue by the said abbot, who was well known to her, which had also helped to bring about this prompt exchange of bridegrooms.

Finally, embracing her with many tears, the worthy dame gave her those last instructions that ladies are







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so fond of giving to brides, advising her to treat her mother-in-law with the greatest respect, and to obey her husband in all things.

The maiden arrived amid a great hubbub, conducted thither by serving-wenchs, chamberlains, esquires, gentlemen and all the members of the House of Chaumont, that you might well have thought it was the procession of a Cardinal Legate. Thus it befell that, on the eve of their marriage, the bride and bridegroom arrived at Moncontour when the feasting was over; they were duly wed, with great splendour, on the Lord's Day. A mass was said at the castle by the Bishop of Blois, who was a great friend of the *Sieur de Moncontour*. In short, they continued the gorging, swilling, capering and merrymaking till cockcrow. When midnight chimed, the bride's attendants conducted her to the nuptial couch: this being the custom in Touraine; whilst raising a thousand little disputes with the poor innocent bridegroom to prevent him joining his equally innocent bride, who encouraged them from ignorance. However the *Sieur de Moncontour* put a stop to the jiggling and jesting, since it was high time for his son to lay siege to this virgin fortress.

Then went Sir Simpleton into his wife's bedchamber, thinking her more beautiful than any of the Italian or Flemish paintings of the Virgin Mary at whose feet he had so often said his paternosters.

Now, I pray you, imagine his embarrassment at finding himself thus speedily converted into a husband; for albeit, he knew nothing of the gentle art, he realised that

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he had certain offices to perform, of which, owing to his bashfulness and unconquerable shyness, he had not had the audacity to seek the necessary information from his father, who had said briefly: "You know what you have to do? Acquit yourself like a man."

Then he saw the gentle maiden, who had been entrusted to him, cosily tucked between the sheets, her head well under, but curious as the very devil, occasionally giving him a piquant sidelong glance, sharp as the point of a spear, and saying to herself, "It is my duty to obey him."

Yet, knowing nothing, she awaited the pleasure of that somewhat ecclesiastical gentleman, to whom, in sooth, she certainly belonged.

Perceiving this, the Chevalier de Moncontour approached the bed, scratched his ear, and then fell on his knees, a thing in which he was expert.

"Have you said your prayers?" asked he, very tremulously.

"No," she replied, "I had forgotten them."

"Would you like to say them?"

Thus the pair of them commenced their marital duties by supplicating God, which was, after all, not a bad idea.

Howbeit, as ill luck would have it, the Devil alone heard and answered their prayers, God being, at the time, entirely taken up with this new and altogether abominable reformed religion.

"What commands hast thou received?" asked the husband.

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"To love thee," replied she, naïvely.

"That is not what I was told; but I do love thee, and, I fear me, more than I love God!"

These words did not appear to scare the little bride in the least.

"I should like very well," said the husband, "to come into your bed, if it will not inconvenience you."

"I will make room for you most willingly, for is it not my duty to submit to you?"

"That is well," said he. "But do not look at me: I am going to undress and come."

At this artless speech the damsel turned towards the wall, and awaited his coming expectantly, seeing that it was the first time she had ever found herself thus separated from a man by the thickness of his shirt alone.

Then came the poor jackanapes, slipped into bed, and so, they were, to all appearances, united, but actually as far as ever from you know what.

Have you ever seen an ape brought from his native land overseas, given, for the first time, a nut? Master ape, knowing by that instinct, so highly developed in monkeys, how delicious is the substance concealed within that shell, sniffs at it and twists and turns it about in a thousand monkeyish ways, muttering I know not what under his breath. Ah! How lovingly he studies it! With what delight he examines it; how minutely inspects it, then taps it, rolls it, pinches it, hurls it from him in a fit of temper, and then, if he is an ape of low extraction and mean intelligence, abandons the nut altogether.



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Thus it was with our poor simpleton, who, towards daybreak, was forced to admit to his dear little wife, that he knew not how to perform these rites, nor what these rites were, and in order to obtain the much desired information, it would be necessary for him to seek help and advice on the subject.

"Yes," sighed she, "since I, unhappily, can teach you nothing!"

In fact, in spite of their best endeavours, essays of every kind, in spite of a thousand things which suggest themselves to the simple-minded, which would never occur to those wiser in matters of love, the unhappy pair fell asleep, miserable at having failed to crack the hard nut of matrimony. But they agreed that it would be wiser to say they were very well matched.

When the bride arose as much a virgin as ever, seeing that the battle for her maidenhead was, as yet, unfought, she bragged of the delightful night she had spent, saying she had won a king of husbands, but continued jesting and answering questions like one who knows nothing about such things. Also everyone found the maiden a little too knowing; for a lady of Roche-Corbon played off on her a joke of double meaning, by asking a young girl, who was ignorant of such matters, to question the bride thus—"How many loaves did your husband put in the oven?"

"Four and twenty," said she.

Now the bridegroom was looking very sad, to the great distress of his wife, who kept an eye on him, hoping he would soon acquire the knowledge they so de-



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sired. The ladies came to the conclusion that the delights of this night had cost him dear, and that his wife was already regretting having so soon sucked him dry.

During breakfast came the coarse jests which, at that time, were swallowed with relish. Someone said that the bride had an open appearance; another, that some good blows had fallen that night in the castle; this one said the loaves had been burnt; that one, that two families had this night lost that which they would never recover. And a thousand jokes of a similar nature, cock and bull stories and two-edged thrusts, which unluckily conveyed nothing to the husband.

Owing to the abundance of everything provided by relatives, neighbours and others, no one had been to bed; all was roystering, feasting and dancing, in the manner customary at the weddings of nobility.

All this was very pleasing to my lord of Braguelongne, at whom Madame d'Amboise, scarlet with the exciting thoughts of all the delicious things that were happening to her daughter, kept casting amorous glances like an old crow who seeks a mate.

The poor civil lieutenant, although full wise in matters of law, bumbaileys, sergeants, and well used to pouncing on all rogues and rascals in Paris, pretended not to see the felicity offered him by his lady.

You may imagine that he sometimes found this good lady's affection a heavy burden, and he only adhered to her from a sense of honour, for it did not become a lieutenant of Police to change his mistress as often as a

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gentleman of the Court, sith it was his duty to see that law or order was observed by others. Albeit his revolt must come to a head.

On the day after the wedding, a large number of guests took their departure, thus leaving Madame d'Amboise, Monsieur de Braguelongne and other relatives free to seek their beds. Just as he was about to commence his supper, the lieutenant received a verbal summons, which it would not be seemly to ignore, seeing that it had to do with a princess, and to advance any reasons for delay to propose any suspension of the sitting. During supper, the Lady of Amboise made more than a hundred signals in an endeavour to draw the good Braguelongne from the room where he was closeted with the bride. But instead of the lieutenant out came the husband, to stroll about in the company of his wife's mother. For in the mind of this simple youth had sprung up, like a mushroom, an urgent desire to question this good lady whom he believed to be fully wise. Recalling to mind the sage counsels of his abbé, admonishing him to seek advice in all things from older people who were well versed in the ways of life, he thought of entrusting his affair to the Lady d'Amboise. But, at first, he was shy and breathless, searching here and there, without success, for words in which to expose this same affair. And equally silent was the lady, furiously angry at the blindness, deafness, and voluntary paralysis of the Sieur de Braguelongne; and muttering to herself, as she walked beside this succulent dainty for whom she had no thoughts to spare, never dreaming

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that this cat, so well provided with bacon fat, should be thinking of an old woman.

“That old clodpate, with a beard of flies’ legs; a loose old grey beard; a decayed beard; a witless beard; a beard without shame; a fornicating beard; a beard which feigns neither to feel, see, nor hear; a clipped, beaten, murrained, degutted beard. May a pox seize on this gulli-gutted catchpole with a mashed nose, a fiery, frozen nose, a devil-damned nose, a nose dry as a lute-table, black-bleached, soulless nose, a nose which is no better than a shadow, which sees nothing, wrinkled as a vine leaf, nose that I loathe! old nose! nose stuffed with wind! dead nose! What was I thinking of to attach myself to this truffle nose, to this old bolt who cannot find its socket; the devil take my share of this inglorious old nose, this gemless old beard, this old grey head of this monkey face, this lily livered specimen of a dunghill; this old bundle of rags and tatters; of this I don’t know what! I’ll find a young man, who’ll husband me properly—and often—and every day—and well!——”

So engrossed with these thoughts was she, that when the innocent husband commenced his refrain, she was so a-boil that, at the first words, she took fire like a piece of old tinder in a soldier’s blunderness. Then thinking it as well to test her son-in-law, said to herself:

“Ah! Sweet-scented young beard—Ah! Pretty little pillicock! Fresh beard, innocent nose, virgin beard, joyous nose, beard of Springtime, little key of Love!”

She kept on talking all the while they walked round the garden, which was very long, and finally planned

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with our simpleton that when night fell, he should leave his bedchamber and come to hers, where she undertook to teach him more than his father had ever known.

Well satisfied, the husband thanked Madame d'Amboise and bade her breathe no word thereof to living soul. Meanwhile the good old Braguelongne was chafing and fretting and muttering to himself: "Old ha! ha! Old ha! ha! A turd upon thee! May a cancer gnaw thee! Toothless old curry-comb! Old slipper too big for any foot! Old fowling piece! Ten year old codfish! Old spider that never stirs save when weaving her web! Old gape-eyed corpse! Old devil's cradle; old cate-seller's lantern; old slabber-chops cutpurse; old grumbling-gut; the sight of thee would make death weep; old church-vermin; old sheath of a hundred knives; old as a church-porch worn out with much kneeling; old money-box wherein everyone has put his piece! I would barter the rest of my life to be rid of thee!"

While he was thus occupied with these charming thoughts, the pretty little bride was thinking sadly of her husband's regrets that he knew nothing of that essential ingredient of the matrimonial pie; and she, knowing equally little, pondered how she might save him much labour, humiliation and pain by enlightening herself. She dwelt with pleasure on the thought of his rapture and astonishment when next night she would be able to instruct him in his duties, saying, "There, that is the way, my sweeting!"

Having been taught by her dear dowager to treat



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elderly folk with the greatest respect, she thought to coax this good man in the sweetest way, and beg him to distil for her the mysterious sweetness of love's secret. The lord of Braguelongne, ashamed of being thus enwrapped in these painful thoughts of this evening's work to the neglect of his fair companion, asked the little bride if she was not very happy to have found so good a husband.

"Yes, he is very good," replied she.

"Too good—perhaps," said the lieutenant, smiling.

Then and there, they talked things over so satisfactorily, that my lord began to sing quite another tune: one that crackled with glee, and he undertook to spare no pains to enlighten the daughter-in-law of Madame d'Amboise, who promised to come to his room for her lesson.

After supper, Madame d'Amboise treated the *Sieur de Braguelongne* to a tune in a terribly high key, accusing him of ingratitude for all the blessings she had brought him—money, estates, devotion, and so on; she raged for half an hour without having exhausted a quarter of her wrath. Whereupon a hundred daggers were drawn between them, but the sheaths were left unscathed.

Meanwhile, the young husband and wife were deliberating how each could get away to seek pleasure for the other. The husband said he knew not why but he felt dizzy and must have air. So his virgin wife thoughtfully suggested a stroll in the moonlight; but he felt sad at the thought of leaving his little wife alone



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even for a moment. However, to cut a long story short, they each, at different times, left the conjugal bed and came in great haste to their teachers, where they received most satisfactory instruction. How? Nay, that I cannot tell you, for each one has his own rules and usages, and of all the sciences this is the most mobile in its principle. You may be quite sure that never did scholars con with greater eagerness a lesson on the rules of any language, grammar, or any other lessons whatsoever.

Then the two love-birds returned to their nest, overjoyed at being able to tell one another the result of their scientific peregrinations.

"Ah! my sweetheart," said the bride, "you already know a great deal more than my master!"

From this curious experiment proceeded complete conjugal happiness and perfect fidelity; for upon their entry into love's kingdom, each discovered that the other was a thousand times wiser in that art than any one else, not excepting their masters. Thus, as long as they lived, they were entirely content with one another. And in his old age, the *Sieur de Moncontour* was wont to say to his friends:

"Take my advice: be cuckolds when the ear is green and not when 'tis ripe for harvesting."

This is the moral to be observed by all connubial cod-pieces.

A DEAR NIGHT OF LOVE



**I**N THE winter when there broke out the great quarrel between the rival religious factions, the quarrel which came to be known as the Tumulte d'Amboise, an advocate, hight Avenelles, made loan of his dwelling, which was situated in the rue des Marmouzets, to the Huguenots, so that they might hold their interviews and conventions therein, he being a partisan of their cause, albeit he wotted not that the Prince of Condé, La Regnaudie, and others were plotting the abduction of the King.

The aforesaid Avenelles was an evil red-bearded rascal, as shiny as a stick of liquorice, fiendishly pale, as are all the quibblers and logic choppers who bury themselves in darksome chambers of the law courts. Not to put too fine a point on it, he was the most villainous specimen of a lawyer that ever drew breath, thinking it a fine joke to help a man to the gallows, willing to do anything for money, a proper Judas of a fellow. Some authors, and they are well informed regarding lawyers and their business, hold that in this affair he was half knave, half fool, of which there is abundant evidence in the story we are going to relate. This lawyer of ours had taken to wife a right comely townswoman of Paris, of whom he was so jealous that he would have slain her for a mere crease in the bedclothes, if she could not have

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explained it to rights. And that would have been an evil thing to do, for it often chances that creases are void of all offence. Howbeit, she folded her sheets with care and there was an end on't. Now you may well imagine that, knowing the evil and murderous nature of the man, she played the part of the faithful spouse, always ready as a candlestick, punctual in her duty as a cupboard that budes not and only opens when required. Nathless, the lawyer kept her under the tutelage and watchful eye of an aged serving-woman, a duenna as ill-favoured as a pot without a spout. This ancient crone had been nurse to the Sieur Avenelles and held him in much affection. Alas, then, for this poor dame; the sole distraction she was able to enjoy in her bleak and cheerless existence was to go and perform her devotions at the church of Saint John on the Place de Grève, which, as all the world doth know, is the trysting place of the dandies and fine ladies of the town. Then, what time she was saying her paternosters to God, she feasted her eyes on the sight of all these gallants, curled and trimmed and titivated, going and coming, and flitting about like so many butterflies. At last, she picked out one from all the throng: a gentleman who was a friend of the Queen-Mother, a handsome Italian with whom she fell madly in love, because he was in the flower of his youth, elegantly dressed, of graceful bearing, courageous of mien, everything, in short, that a gallant should be, to give a full measure of love to a proper young dame confined a little too tightly by the bonds of matrimony, which gall and hamper her, never failing



## A DEAR NIGHT OF LOVE

to encourage her to kick over the conjugal traces. Now you must know too that, on his side, the young gentleman was not a whit less enamoured of the lady than she of him; for her love, mute though it was, spoke to him secretly, though neither they nor the devil himself ever knew how it came about. Thereafter, between each and other, there passed silent exchanges of love. In the first place, the lawyer's wife never recked of her dress save to come to church, and she always came thither attired in new and costly finery. Then, instead of fixing her thoughts on God, whereat God was enraged, she thought only of her fine gentleman, and neglecting her prayers, resigned herself to the fire which burned so fiercely in her bosom, moistening her eyes and lips and I know not what, for 'tis a sort of fire that always runs to water in the end. And right often, she would say to herself, "Marry, but I would lay down my life if only I might come to close quarters with this comely gallant that loves one." Ay, and how oft, instead of saying her prayers to Our Lady the Virgin, she would revolve such thoughts as these within her bosom, "To enjoy the youthful vigour of this gentle lover, and to drink of love's joys to the full, to taste it all in a single moment, I'd let them cast me to the flames wherein they put heretics to death." And so this gallant, when he beheld the loveliness of the worthy woman and the super-rubefaction of her cheeks when he looked at her, did never fail to approach the seat where she sate and sent her those imploring messages which women never fail to understand. Then to himself he would say:

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“By the duplicated horns of my father, I swear I will have this woman, even if I die in the attempt.”

And when the duenna was looking the other way, the lovers pressed, hugged, sniffed, breathed, gnawed, and devoured each other; kissing each other with an expression that would have set fire to the fuse of an arquebuse, if there had been such a thing as an arquebuse there. A love so ardent as this had perforce to come to a point. The gallant, therefore, dressed himself up as one of Montaigne's students and proceeded to entertain lawyer Avenelles' clerks and to disport himself in their company in order to discover the goings and comings of the husband, when he was out, when he went on a journey, and so forth, eager to seize an opportunity to clap the horns on him. And this was how the occasion came about. The lawyer, compelled to follow the course of this conspiracy, although, for his own part, he had made up his mind, if need arose, to divulge it to the Guises, resolved to proceed to Blois, where the Court was then staying and in great danger of being carried off. Knowing this full well, our gallant got to Blois in advance of him and there concocted a wondrous snare into which Master Avenelles, despite his cunning, could not help but fall, and from which he could only extricate himself again adorned with the insignia of the most deeply dyed of cuckolds. So our Italian, drunk with love, gathered all his pages and retainers about him, and cunningly distributed them about the town in such wise that, on the arrival of the lawyer, his wife and her duenna, it was declared to them at all the hostelryes, where they sought

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lodging, that the hostelry being full, owing to the presence of the Court, they must needs apply elsewhere. Next, the gentleman made an agreement with the landlord of the *Soleil Royal* that he should have the whole house to himself and should occupy it, none of the ordinary servants remaining in the place. For greater surety in the matter, the gentleman sent the head-cook and all his fellows into the country, and so primed his own men that the lawyer should know nought of the exchange. So now behold my merry gentleman taking into his hostelry all his friends who had come to attend the Court. For his own accommodation, he kept a room just above those in which he designed to lodge his fair mistress, the lawyer and the duenna. And in the floor of his room he caused a trap-door to be fitted. Then he charged his principal servant to play the part of the landlord, dressed up his pages like waiters and his serving-women like chamber-maids. After which, he waited while his spies should bring all the actors in the farce to the inn, to wit, the wife, the husband, the duenna and all; and behold they came, even as he had planned. Seeing the great concourse of noble lords, merchants, men-at-arms, serving-men and others, owing to the presence in the town of the young King, the two Queens, the Guises, and all the Court, no one had time or opportunity to get wind of the plot that had been so cunningly laid at the hostelry of the *Soleil Royal*. Behold then Master Avenelles, rebuffed and rejected from one inn after another, he, his wife and the duenna! And so he deemed himself mighty lucky to find a lodging at the *Soleil Royal*,

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where the gallant was simmering in anticipation of tasting the joys of love. As soon as the lawyer had been assigned his apartments, the gallant began pacing to and fro in the courtyard, keeping on the alert in the hope and expectation of intercepting a glance from his lady's eye. He had not long to wait, for in no great while the lady looked down into the court, as ladies will, and recognised, not without a thrill of emotion, her gallant and beloved gentleman. Judge if she were happy or no. And if, by chance, they had happened to be alone for space, the gallant fellow would not have had to wait a moment for his bliss, so blazing hot with love was she from head to foot.

"Marry, but 'tis scorching hot in the rays of this lord!" she exclaimed, seeming to mean the sun, which was shining brilliantly.

Hearing that, the lawyer leapt to the window and clapped eyes on my gentleman.

"So-ho!" said he. "So you must needs have lords, must you, my lady?" So saying, he caught hold of her arm and flung her, as though she had been one of his brief bags, on the bed. "Mark my words," he went on, "if I had a wallet at my side where others wear a sword, and if in that wallet I had a penknife, that same penknife should go to your heart at the slightest suspicion of any conjugal monkey tricks. It seems to me that I have seen this gentleman somewhere or other."

So harsh and brutal was the lawyer's behaviour that the lady rose in a tempest of indignation.

"Marry then, kill me! I should scorn to deceive you!









Never again shall you touch me, after threatening me so! And from this day forth, I warn you, my only thought will be to find a gentler lover to sleep with than you, you miserable curmudgeon!"

"There, there, my chuck!" said the lawyer, quite taken aback. "I went too far. Kiss me, darling, and grant me your forgiveness."

"I will neither kiss nor pardon you!" said she. "You are a villain!"

Avenelles, beside himself with rage, tried to take by force what his spouse denied him, and there followed a battle royal from which the husband emerged all covered with scratches. But the worst of it was that the lawyer, with these marks of violence upon him, having an appointment with the conspirators who were assembled in council, was compelled to quit his gentle spouse and to leave her in the custody of the aged duenna.

No sooner had the man of law made his exit, than the gallant, posting one of his men at the street corner to keep watch, hurried upstairs to his most excellent trap-door, lifted it up noiselessly, signalled to the lady with a "Pst! Pst!", which though scarcely audible, reached the lady through her heart—an organ that seldom misses anything. Up went the lady's head, and lo! There was her lover about four flea jumps above her head. At a sign from him, she took hold of a couple of strands of thick silk whereto were attached two loops through which she put her arms and then, in a trice, up she went by means of a brace of pulleys straight to the floor above, by the cleft in the heavens which, closing even

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as they had opened, left the old duenna in an agony of perplexity; for when she turned round, there was no one to be seen. Her charge had been stolen. But how? By whom? By what? Where was she? Pille, Nade, Locque, Fore. She was about as wise as the alchemists at their cauldrons poring over Her Trippa. The only things the duenna knew about were the crucible and the philosopher's stone. The latter was the cuckoldification of the husband, the former the pretty little you-know-what of his wife. So there she stood, utterly bewildered, waiting for Master Avenelles, which is as good as to say waiting for death. For, in his rage, he would assuredly make short work of everything and everybody. Escape was impossible for the hapless duenna, for to make assurance doubly sure, the jealous knave had taken the keys with him. What a sight it was that dawned on the view of Mistress Avenelles: a dainty supper, a glowing fire on the hearth, but a still better one in her lover's heart. He folded her in his arms, kissed her, with tears of joy, first on her eyes out of gratitude for the warm glances she had given him in the Church of Saint-Jean-en-Grève. The kind little woman, all on fire with love, did not withhold her lips from her lover's advances, and readily suffered herself to be adored, fondled and caressed as hungry lovers are wont to perform that office. And forthwith they made up their minds that they would be all in all to each other, the whole night through, regardless of what might befall them in the future; she, counting the future as nought in comparison with the joys of that night; he, trusting to his sword and

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his address to win him many another like it. In short, they both of them recked little enough of life, if only in one long embrace, it might be granted them to consummate a thousand lives, enjoy a thousand blisses, giving and taking and giving again, each to the other. Falling down, down, he and she, into the abyss of unfathomable bliss clasped in a desperate embrace, thrusting all the passion that possessed them into one single long frenzied embrace. Never, I ween, was there such passionate ardour. Little know they of love, those muddy-mettled citizens who sleep so peacefully beside their good wives. They know not the thrills that stir the bosom, the warm outpourings of life's essence, the vigorous embraces, whereas two young lovers, all pale with passion, yet radiant with desire, take their fill of mutual joy, though death itself be there to threaten them. So Madame and her gallant ate but a scanty supper and betook themselves betimes to bed. And now we needs must leave them to their blissful toil, for no speech, save indeed the speech of the gods, the which is hidden from us, could depict the sweet agony and agonised sweetness of their joy. Meantime, the worthy Master Avenelles is so absolute a cuckold that all thoughts of marriage went completely by the board; good Master Avenelles, I say, found himself in evil case. To the Council of the Huguenots there came the Prince de Condé, accompanied by all the chiefs and bigwigs, and there it was resolved to abduct the Queen-Mother, the Guises, the young King, the young Queen, and thus to subvert the Government. The lawyer, scared at this grave turn, feeling his head

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in danger, and quite unconscious of what was a'planting there, hurried off to disgorge the secrets of the conspiracy to my Lord the Cardinal of Lorraine. He hastened with the lawyer to see the Duke, his brother, and there they all three sate talking and planning, promising fine things to Master Avenelles whom, with great reluctance, they suffered to depart about midnight, at which hour he issued secretly from the château. Now at that moment, the gallant's pages and all his servants were raising the very devil of a hullabaloo in honour of the fortuitous espousals of their master. Coming then to the house when the orgy was at its noisiest, and the revellers were making the welkin ring with shouts of wildest merriment, the worthy Master Avenelles was assailed with gibes and jests, and peals of laughter that made him turn pale as death when, on reaching his chamber, he beheld there only the duenna and no one else. The unhappy creature endeavoured to explain, but the lawyer promptly stopped her mouth with his fist and commanded her by a gesture to silence. Then he searched in his bag and took therefrom a trusty dagger. Then, as he was withdrawing it from its sheath and feeling its point, a hearty, guileless, joyous, amorous, bewitching heavenly peal of laughter, followed by some words of unmistakable import, came down from the trap-door. The cunning lawyer, putting out his candle, discerned through the crevices in the ceiling, by reason of a defect in this very extra-legal doorway, a light which vaguely illuminated the mystery; for he recognised the voices of his wife and the warrior. The outraged husband took the







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duenna by the arm, stealthily mounted the stairs in order to discover the door of the lover's chamber. This he quickly found. Then, as you may guess, with a terrific and most lawyer-like onslaught, he battered down the door, and at a single bound, leapt on to the bed, where he caught his wife half-naked in the gallant's arms.

"Ah!" she groaned.

The gallant, avoiding the blow, endeavoured to wrest the dagger from the lawyer's hands, but he held it fast. Now, in this life-and-death affair, the husband, feeling himself hampered by his *locum tenens*, who was gripping him grievously with his fingers of iron, and being likewise bitten by his wife, who was rending and tearing him with her teeth—as a dog will gnaw a bone—he be-thought him how he might the more effectually appease his choler. So did our freshly becuckolded gentleman, speaking in his patois, whisper to his servant-woman to bind the lovers with the silken cords of the trap-door, and he himself, flinging away his dagger, helped the duenna to entangle them. The thing being done with a deft turn or two of the hand, he stuffed their mouths with linen so that they should utter no cry, and then, without a word ran to pick up his dagger. But, just at that moment, in burst several of the Duke de Guise's officers. During the struggle, no one had heard them come in and turn the hostelry upside down, in their endeavor to put their hands on Master Avenelles. These men-at-arms, whose attention was suddenly drawn by the pages to the noble lord bound, gagged and nearly

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done to death, flung themselves between the man with the dagger and the lovers, disarmed him and then fulfilled their mission by placing him under arrest and taking him off to the dungeon of the château; him, his wife and the duenna. Thereupon, the followers of Messieurs de Guise, recognising one of their masters' friends whom the Queen was waiting for to come to the council, bade him go off with them. Then did the gallant, quickly loosed from his bonds, whisper to the chief of the escort, begging him on his life, and for the love of him, to see to it that the husband was kept apart from his wife, promising him his favour, promotion and much money to boot, if he would undertake to obey him in this matter. Then, to make more certain of his man, he discovered to him the why and the wherefore of the thing, telling him that if the husband got within reach of his dainty little wife, he would for a surety give her a thrust in the belly that she would never recover from. Finally, he bade him to put the dame into a cheerful room in the castle gaol, a room on a level with the gardens; and as for the lawyer, to thrust him into a good dark dungeon, and to see to it that he was well and truly bound. All these behests the aforesaid officer promised to perform; and he did all according to the will of the nobleman who accompanied the lady, even to the courtyard of the castle, telling her that for certain this chance would make her a widow, and that perhaps he would espouse her in lawful wedlock. And it came to pass that Master Avenelles was cast into a dark and noisome dungeon, and that his gentle wife was housed in a little room

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above his head, in deference to the wishes of her lover, who was none other than the Lord Scipio Sardini, a nobleman of Lucca, a right wealthy lord, and, as we have said, a friend of Queen Catherine de' Medici who was then hand in glove with the Guises. Then he mounted hastily into the Queen's chamber, where, at that moment, a great secret council was sitting. There the Italian made known what was afoot and the danger in which the Court was standing. My Lord Sardini found the confidential counsellors sore taken aback and surprised by this plot. But he made all hearts easy by bidding them take all the profit to themselves; and to his advice was due the wise plan of quartering the King in the château of Amboise in order to catch the heretics like rats in a sack and slaying them all to a man. Howbeit, everyone knows how the Queen-Mother and the Guises held themselves in the background and how ended the Tumulte d'Amboise. All that is another story.

Now when, in the morning, the company quitted the chamber of the Queen-Mother, where everything had been arranged, my Lord Sardini, not for a moment forgetting his love for the little bourgeoisie, albeit he was then deeply engaged with the fair Limeuil, a young lady belonging to the household of the Queen-Mother and related to her through the family of La Tour de Turenne, enquired how it was that the worthy Judas had been clapped into gaol. Thereupon the Cardinal de Lorraine told him that he had no intention of doing any harm to the quibbling pettifogger, but that fearing lest



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he should repent him of his tergiversation, or to make the more certain of his silence until the business was over, he had put him for a while in the shade, but that he would set him free in due time.

"Set him free!" cried the nobleman. "Ah, say not so! Stuff him rather in a sack and toss me this black-robed knave into the Loire. I know the man, and he is not the sort of fellow to forgive you for locking him up, and to go back to his business as if nothing had happened. Therefore 'twould be a work pleasing in God's sight to disembarass Him of a heretic. Moreover, none will know your secret, and none of his friends will ever think of asking what became of him because he is a traitor. Suffer me to rescue his wife, and leave the rest to me; I will see that you are quit of the affair."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the Cardinal; "you are a cunning counsellor. But before I do as you advise, I'd have them both more closely guarded. Hola there!"

There came to him an aged justiciar to whom he gave orders to let no one whatsoever hold communication with the two prisoners. Then the Cardinal begged Sardini to give out at his hotel that the lawyer had departed from Blois to resume his legal duties in Paris. The people who had been ordered to arrest the lawyer had received verbal instructions to treat him as a person of importance: wherefore they neither stripped nor despoiled him. Thus the lawyer still had thirty crowns in his purse and resolved to part with all he had to satisfy his vengeance; and to prove by convincing arguments to his gaolers that he ought to be permitted to see his

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wife whom he madly adored and with whom, as he was justly entitled to do, he longed to come to close quarters. My Lord Sardini, apprehending danger in general for his mistress from the near neighbourhood of this red-headed quibbler and certain calamities in particular, resolved to carry her off by night and put her in a place of safety. To this end, he hired a boat and boatmen, concealed them nigh to the bridge, and ordered three of his most active fellows to climb up to the bars of the cell, seize the lady and bring her to the wall of the gardens, where he would lie in wait for her.

These preparations being duly made, and some good rope purchased, he obtained leave to have an audience, in the morning, of the Queen-Mother, whose apartments were situated above the moat where the lawyer and his wife lay imprisoned; for he trusted that the Queen would lend her countenance to the abduction. He was duly received by her and implored her not to take it ill if, unbeknown to the Cardinal and the Duke of Guise, he rescued the lady in question. And then he once more besought her to order M. de Lorraine to fling the man into the river. Whereunto the Queen said *Amen*. Next, the lover quickly sent his mistress a letter concealed in a dish of cucumbers to acquaint her with her approaching widowhood and the hour of her deliverance, whereat the bourgeoisie rejoiced greatly. Then, when twilight was deepening, the Queen caused the soldiers of the watch to leave the spot, sending them to examine a moon ray whereof she was apprehensive. Forthwith the gallant's servants hastily raised the grille and hoisted

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up the lady, who came with a will, and was conducted to my Lord Sardini at the garden wall.

But no sooner was the postern gate shut to and the Italian outside with his lady, than the lady cast aside her cloak and in an instant changed into a lawyer. In a trice, the lawyer sprang at his adversary's throat, trying to strangle him and dragging him towards the water to pitch him into the Loire. Sardini fought madly, shouting wildly and trying to defend himself without being able, despite his dagger, to rid himself of the sable-suited devil. At last his lips were sealed in silence as he stumbled into a slough beneath the feet of the lawyer, where he saw, in the confusion of this hellish struggle and by the light of the moon, the blood-stained visage of his wife. The lawyer, mad with rage, let go the Italian, believing him to be dead and also because the servants, armed with torches, were hurrying to the spot. He just had time to leap into the boat and succeeded in getting clear away.

Thus it was that the unhappy Mistress Avenelles died a lonely death, for that my Lord Sardini, who had been only half strangled, was discovered lying unconscious, and brought back to life. Later, as is well known, he married the fair Limeuil, after that pretty woman had been delivered of a child in the Queen's closet. 'Twas a terrible affair which the Queen-Mother, out of kindness, endeavoured to hush up, and which, out of the great love he bore her, Sardini covered up by marriage—an act which Catherine rewarded by assigning him the fine estate of Chaumont-sur-Loire and the Castle to boot.

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But he had been so furiously gripped, maltreated, trodden on and kicked by the husband that he did not make old bones, and the fair Limeuil found herself a widow in the springtime of her life. Despite the assault, the lawyer was not tracked down. On the contrary, he had the astuteness to get himself included in the last amnesty among those who were on no account to be molested. He had gone back to the Huguenots and had been working, on their behalf, in Germany.

Poor Mistress Avenelles! Pray for her salvation; for she was cast no one knows where, without the prayers of the Church, without Christian burial. Spare a thought for her, all ye happy dames whose love-affairs go prosperously.





THE SERMON OF THE MERRY OLD VICAR OF  
MEUDON



WHEN Maître François Rabelais came for the last time to the Court of King Henry, the second of that name, it was during that same winter in the course of which he was obliged, by nature's decree, to slough off his doublet of flesh to live again and for ever in those glorious works of excellent philosophy whereto we shall always be compelled to have recourse. The worthy man had then as near as may be counted seventy hatchings of the swallows. His Homeric pate was pretty nigh innocent of hair, but his beard still flourished in all its majesty, and the springtime still glowed in his quiet smile, even as all wisdom had its dwelling in his ample brow. He was a splendid old man, if we are to credit those who had the good fortune to behold his countenance wherein Socrates and Aristophanes, whilom enemies but now reconciled in that same face, mingled their features. Hearing then his last hour ringing in his ears, he resolved to go and pay his homage to the King of France. For that his said Majesty having arrived in his castle of Tournelles, the worthy man had the Court within a stone's throw, seeing that he dwelt in a house situate in the gardens of Saint Paul. There were then gathered together in the chamber of Queen Catherine, Madame Diane, whom as a matter of high policy she received

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among her company, the King, my lord the Constable, the Cardinals de Lorraine and du Bellay, Messieurs de Guise, my lord de Birague and other Italians who were then making great progress at Court under the patronage of the Queen; the Admiral Montgomery, the various members of the household on duty, and certain poets such as Melin de Saint-Gelays, Philibert de l'Orme, and the Sieur de Brantôme.

Perceiving the good man, the King, who deemed him a facetious fellow, said to him with a smile:

"Hast ever coughed up a sermon to your parishioners at Meudon?"

Master Rabelais wist well that the King was speaking jestingly since he had never recked aught of his curé save to take the revenues thereof, and he made answer, saying:

"Sire, my flock are in all places and my sermons are well known and heeded throughout Christendom."

Then, casting a glance round at all the people of the Court, who, save Messieurs du Bellay and de Chastillon, considered him in the light of a learned Triboulet, whereas he was in reality the King of wits, ay and much more of a king than he whose kindly crown was all the courtiers revered—then, I say, there came upon our old friend, before his hour should come to shake off the dust of this world, a mischievous desire to micturate, in a philosophical sense, upon the heads of all the company, even as the good Gargantua delighted to bepiss the people of Paris from the towers of Notre-Dame.

"If so be you are in a proper frame of mind, Sire, I can entertain you with a brave little sermon that never

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comes amiss, a sermon which I have kept under the drum of my left ear, so as always to have it handy for a suitable occasion, as it were an auricular parable."

"Messieurs," said the King, "Master François Rabelais is about to hold forth, and it is our salvation that is at stake. Therefore, perpend and lend an attentive ear, for his discourse abounds in apostolic drolleries."

"Sire," quoth our friend, "I will begin."

Thereupon did all the courtiers hold their peace, ranging themselves in a circle, bending like osier twigs, round about the father of Pantagruel who then belobbed them with the following tale in language whereof nothing could rival the lofty eloquence. Forasmuch, however, as the said tale has only been handed down to us by verbal tradition, the author will be pardoned if he sets it down in his own language:

In his old days, Gargantua was accustomed to commit strange vagaries, whereat the people of his household did greatly marvel, but which were freely forgiven him, withal, seeing that his years numbered seven hundred and four, despite the statement of Saint Clement of Alexandria who would have it that they totalled one quarter of a year below that figure, which is of small account. Now this kindly old master, perceiving that everything was going to Hell in his house and that everyone was trying to feather his own nest, and was sore afraid lest he should be left naked in his last moments, set himself to discover a more perfect method of administering his domains. And he did well. Therefore in clos-



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ets of the Gargantuan dwelling he stored up a fine heap of red wheat, not to mention twenty jars of mustard and many tasty and delectable morsels, such as Touraine plums and halleberges, pancakes, rillons, rillettes, Olivet cheeses, cheeses of goat's milk and many other kinds well known 'twixt Langeais and Loches, pots of butter, hare pasties, ducks à la dodine, pigs' trotters in jelly, links, chitterlings, botargoes, bags of shelled peas, pretty little boxes of Orleans barrels of lampreys, plenty of green sauce, all manner of fish from the river, francolys, tyransons, wild duck, pouacres, phenicoptères preserved in sea salt, candied grapes, tongues smoked in accordance with the recipe invented by Happe-Mousche, his famous ancestor; then there were sweetmeats for Gargamelle on high days and holidays, and hosts of other things too numerous to mention, but whereof you may read the list in the collection of Riparian Laws and in other documents taken from the Capitularies, Pragmaticks, Royal Establishments, Ordinances and Regulations of the time. In a word, the goodman, sticking his barnacles on his nose, or his nose into his barnacles, set about looking for a proper dragon or unicorn whereunto the safeguarding of this precious treasure might be entrusted. Revolving this grave problem within his bosom, he began to pace up and down his gardens. He would have nought to do with a Coxcigrue because the Egyptians had fared ill with them, as we may learn from the hieroglyphs. He spurned all the cohorts of the Caucquemorres seeing that the Emperors had grown sick of them and the Romans, too, according





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to the reports of that cunning fellow who goes by the name of Tacitus. Next he rejected the Pichrocholiers all in senate assembled; likewise shovelfuls of Mages, whole basketfuls of Druids, the legions of the Papi-manians and Massarets that spread and invade every land, even as his son Pantagrue had informed him when he came home from his journey. So it befell that the good old man, diligently beating the coverts of ancient Gaulish history, could find no race of beings in which he could put his trust and, had it been permissible, he would have begged a new variety from the Creator of all things; but not daring to reproach Him with His niggardness, poor Gargantua knew not whom to choose and was thinking he would be bereft of all his good things when he chanced, as he was going his ways, to fall in with a pretty little shrew-mouse of the noble race of shrew-mice who all carry gules on a field azure. Od's boddikins, now, 'twas a fine male specimen, with the finest tail of any of his tribe, and he preened himself in the sun like one of God's brave shrew-mice proud of having been in this world ever since the flood, as could be proved by letters-patent of incontestable authenticity registered in the rolls of the Universal Parliament, seeing that in the Œcumenical archives it is recorded that there was a shrew-mouse in Noah's Ark.

At this point Maître Alcofribas lifted his cap a little and proceeded reverently:

Noah, my lords, who planted the vine and was the first who ever had the good fortune to befuddle himself

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with the juice of the grape. . . . Now, perdy, there was a shrew-mouse in the Ark, whence we all of us issued; but the men married beneath them, but not so the shrew-mice; for the shrew-mice have more family pride in their composition than any other animals whatsoever and would not receive so much as a rod, pole or perch of land without that same land taking on the special gift of transmuting the grain of sand into pretty, fresh nuts. This virtue—so well becoming a gentleman—having found favour in the worthy Gargantua's eyes, he took it into his head to confer on this shrew-mouse the custody of his granaries investing him with the most plenary powers: Justice, Committimus, Missi Dominici, Clergy, Men-at-Arms, and everything. The shrew-mouse promised that he would faithfully perform his duties and fulfil his office as a loyal shrew-mouse should, on condition that he should take up his quarters in the corn-stack—a request which the good Gargantua deemed reasonable enough. So behold our shrew-mouse dancing and prancing in his splendid abode, happy as a prince is happy when he is happy, betaking himself to reconnoitre his spacious mustard lands, his realms of sugar, his provinces of ham, his duchies of grapes, his counties of chitterlings, his baronies of every sort, climbing up on his mound of wheat, swishing everything with his tail. In fine, wherever he went, the shrew-mouse was received with honour by all the crocks, which maintained a respectful silence, all save one or two golden goblets which clanged and clashed against one another like church-bells ringing the tocsin, whereat he did show



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himself mighty content and bowed his thanks to right and left, as he coxcombed it along in a ray of sunlight that lay athwart his wheaten dwelling. And so brightly shone his tawny covering of fur, that you might have taken him for some Muscovite King in his cloak of sable. Then when he had run hither and thither, jumped and pranced and capered to his heart's content, he cracked a couple of grains of wheat and sate himself down in the corn heap for all the world like a monarch enthroned in full court, and he deemed himself the bravest of shrew-mice. And now, at this moment, there came along their customary holes, the gentlemen of the Court of Night-walkers, who sped trotting mincingly along the rafters—by which I mean rats, mice and all manner of gnawing, thieving, idle beasts detested by the bourgeois and the housekeepers.

Now all of them, at the sight of this shrew-mouse, were seized with a great fear and sat trembling on the threshold of their dwellings. But despite the threatened danger, there was one among all these little painted heads—to wit, an old rascal of the trotting, nibbling tribe of mice—who putting his little muzzle to the window, was so bold as to have a good look at my lord shrew-mouse, squatting so proudly on his behind, with his tail in the air, and at length recognised him for a fellow from whom he could only look for blows and scratches. And this is how he came to this conclusion. The good Gargantua, to the end that the high authority of his lieutenant should be universally known and acknowledged by all shrew-mice, cats, squirrels, ferrets,

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moles, mice, rats and other rascally fellows of the same kidney, had lightly dipped his muzzle, which was as pointed as a pin, into some oil of musk, the which has ever since clung to all the rest of the tribe, seeing that the one so treated did rub himself, contrary to the sage advice of Gargantua, against the other members of his tribe. From this cause arose all the pother in the land of the shrew-mice, whereof I could read you a full and true account in a book of history, if time were not lacking. Thereupon an aged mouse or rat—the Rabbis of the Talmud are not yet agreed as to the species—recognising by the aforesaid perfume that the shrew-mouse was entrusted with the duty of keeping guard over Gargantua's corn, and that, to that purpose, the said shrew-mouse had been liberally peppered with honours, invested with due power, and was armed *cap-à-pié*, was in great fear lest there would come an end of the good old days in which, in accordance with the time-honoured customs of the rat and mouse tribe, they could live on crumbs, nibblings, crusts, bits and chips and all the divers things that are to be found in this Rats' Paradise. Now it came to pass that, in this crisis, this worthy mouse, cunning as an old courtier who has lived under two regencies and three kings, resolved to make trial of the shrew-mouse's intelligence, and put himself in jeopardy for the benefit of the whole race of ratamorphic mandibulars. 'Twould have been a brave deed for a man, but 'twas still more so when we remember the selfishness of mice; how they are accustomed to live for themselves alone, without shame or blush, and, to gain

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advancement, would beshit themselves upon a wafer, nibble a priest's stole without a blush, and drink out of a chalice, recking nothing about God. The mouse drew near, making some dainty courtseys, and the shrew-mouse suffered him to draw nigh, for I needs must tell you that, by nature, shrew-mice see but ill. Then the Curtius of the nibblers spake on this wise, not in mouse patois, but in the true Tuscan tongue of the shrew-mice.

"Good my Lord, I have often heard tell of your glorious family, whereof I am one of the most devoted servants, and I know all the great deeds which your ancestors wrought, your forefathers who, of yore, were revered by the Egyptians of old, by whom they were held in great veneration and adored even as though they had been sacred birds. Nathless your furry robe is so royally perfumed, and the colour thereof is so superflificiliconscientiously tanned, that I almost doubt whether you be one of the race, seeing that I have never seen one so nobly apparelled. Howbeit, you have the gobbled grain after the ancient manner; your snout is the snout of wisdom; you have pushed your way like a knowing shrew-mouse; nathless, how true soever a shrew-mouse you are, you must have, in I know not in what part of your ear, a certain superauditive conduit which a certain wondrous trap shuts up, I wist not how or when, in obedience to your secret commands, in order to give you, I know not wherefore, the faculty of shutting out the sound of certain things that are displeasing to you; all this being on account of the perfection of your sacrosanct auricular apparatus which takes in

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every sound and therefore would, at times, be a source of annoyance to you."

"Right, you are in the right," said the shrew-mouse. "Lo, the trap-door is down! I shall hear nothing."

"Now for it!" said the old knave.

And he betook him straightaway to the heap of corn which he began to draw upon to supply him with victuals against the winter.

"Do you hear aught?" said he.

"I hear nought save the beating of my heart."

"To it, boys!" cried all the mice. "We shall trick him finely."

The shrew-mouse, deeming he had encountered a trusty servitor, opened the trap-door of his musical orifice and heard the trickle of the grain as it ran through the hole. Then, without calling in the aid of the Commissioners of Police, he leapt on the old mouse and strangled him on the spot. A glorious death it was, for the hero died in the very middle of the corn heap and was canonized as a martyr. The shrew-mouse took him by the ears and stuck him up on the granary door, after the manner of the Ottoman Porte, where my brave Panurge was nearly spitted. Hearing the cries of the slaughtered hero, the rats, the mice and all the kindred tribes rushed forth from their holes in a mighty panic. Then when night had come, they all gathered together in the cellar to hold a conference concerning the affairs of the common weal, whereunto, by virtue of the law *Papiria* and other enactments, their lawful spouses were admitted. The rats wanted to go in before the mice,



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and a terrific quarrel regarding the matter of precedence nearly spoilt the whole business. But a great big rat took a mouse under his arm, and so they went in, every rat escorting a mouse, and having mated together thus, they sat them down on their behinds, tails in air, snouts extended, beards bristling and eyes shining like carbuncles. Thereupon there began a long confabulation which ended in the interchange of insults and a hubbub that would have done credit to an assembly of Fathers of the Church gathered together in Œcumenical Council. Some said "Yea," and some said "Nay"; and a cat that chanced to be passing by took fright and fled when sounds so strange as these broke upon her ear: Boo, boo! Froo, oo, oo! Houic! Houic! Briff! Briffnac nac nac! Fouix! Fouix! Trr trr trr trr! Razza za za, zaaa! Brr brrr! Raaa! ra ra ra! Fouix! And all these noises were so confounded and commingled that a party of aldermen on a town council could have done no better. While the storm was at its height, a tiny mouseling, who was of too tender an age to have a seat in the Parliament, came and poked through a chink its inquisitive little snout, whereon the fur was fine and delicate as is the fur of mice that have not nibbled of the tree of knowledge. Then, as the tumult grew, the majority rose up and followed the little snout. Anon, the mouseling fell over the hoop of a wine cask and stuck thereto so cunningly that you might well have taken the thing for some choice masterpiece of an antique bas-relief. Raising his eyes to heaven in search of some sage and salutary remedy to cure the body politic, an aged rat, catch-



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ing sight of this dainty mouse, so delicately shaped, proclaimed that the saviour of the commonweal was among them. So with one accord, every snout was turned towards this Lady of Help, and silence fell upon the whole company. Then forthwith it was agreed to let her go in to the shrew-mouse and, despite the jealousy of some envious mice, she was borne in triumph into the cellar, where, observing her trot so daintily, oscillate so rhythmically her little tail, wag her pretty little head this way and that, twitch diaphanous ears, lick her lips and her downy whiskers with her little pink tongue, the old rats grew enamoured of her and fell to barytonising and monochordising with their wrinkled white whiskered chops, even as of yore the Trojan elders had gazed with admiration upon Helen as she came forth from the bath. And so it came to pass that this maidenly mouse was given the run of the granary and charged to fire the heart of the shrew-mouse with the desire to possess her, and by this means save from death the whole of the corn-nibbling race, even as Esther, the lovely Jewess, did of yore for the Chosen Race in her commerce with Ahasuerus the Sultan, even as it is writ down in the Great Book, for the word Bible cometh from the Greek *Biblos*, as who should say, the Only Book. The mouse-ling promised to deliver the grain-nibblers, for, as chance would have it, she was the queen of mice, so soft, so fair, so plump, the daintiest little lady that had ever trotted joyously along a beam, or scampered along the wain-scot, crying out such sweet tones of delight if she found a nut, or a hoard of crumbs, or pieces of bread, as she





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went her way. A veritable little fairy was she, so fair and frolicsome, with eyes as bright as a pair of white diamonds, a little head, silken fur, amorous body, pink toes, velvety tail, in short a patrician mouse, of high lineage, naturally prone to lying in bed and doing nothing, a merry-hearted mouse, and more knowing than a learned doctor of the Sorbonne deeply versed in the Decretals, with white belly, striped back, little niplets firm and pointed like a subtle hint, teeth of pearl, so fresh and fragrant, a veritable king's portion.

(This was a bold piece of portraiture, for the description of the mouse was so perfect a likeness of Madame Diane, there present, that all the Court was thunderstruck.)

Queen Catherine smiled, but the King laughed on the wrong side of his face. But good Master Rabelais went on with his story, paying no heed to the significant glances of Cardinals du Bellay and Châtillon, who were sore afraid of what the good doctor would be saying. Said he, continuing his narrative:

The pretty mouseling indulged in no protracted circumbilivaginations, and the very first evening our little rodinelle trotted along in view of the shrew-mouse, she captured him for good and all, with her coquetries, her oglings, her swayings, her cajoleries, her dainty demureness, her sidelong glances, all the simpering graces of the maid that would like to, but dare not, little love-bird peckings, hinted caresses, preliminary jugglings, little

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tossings of the head, little *bauteurs* of the mousekin that knows her value, laughing mockery and mocking laughter, all manner of springs and feminine devices, inviting snares, all those lures whereof the females of every land were ever wont to make such abundant use. Thereupon, after a deal of bowing and curtseying, tappings of paws, rubbing of noses, demonstrations of shrew-mouse affection, downward glances, sighings, serenades, luncheons, suppers, dinners in the corn-heap and other pleasures and pastimes, the superintendent of the granary triumphed over the scruples of his fair mistress. They took great delight in that unlawful and incestuous love and, seeing that she held him by the codpiece, the mouse became queen of everything and everyone, was keen to put mustard on her cheese, eat of the sweetest and have her finger in every pie. All this did the shrew-mouse permit to her who wielded the empery over his heart, though by conniving at such practices, he was neglecting his duties and breaking the oaths he had sworn to Gargantua. Pursuing her evangelical emprise with true feminine tenacity, it befell that one night when they were disporting themselves together, the mouseling be-thought her of that old fellow, her father, and felt that she would like him too to be able to nibble his corn when he wanted to and threatened the shrew-mouse that she would leave him to do what he could in his own doublet if he did not give her filial piety every opportunity to grow and expand. So, in a trice, with just a wave of his paw, the shrew-mouse presented letters-patent bearing the impression of the great seal in green wax



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and with lacings of crimson silk, unto the father of his leman, whereby it was ordained that the Gargantuan palace was to be open to him at any hour so that he might come when he listed to see his virtuous daughter, kiss her on the brows and eat his fill, albeit apart and in a corner. Then there came an aged sire, with hoary tail, a right venerable rat, weighing full twenty-five ounces, with a gait like a presiding judge, wagging his head and followed by fifteen or twenty nephews, all of them with teeth like saws, and they made clear to the shrew-mouse, by means of pithy speeches and all manner of observations, that they, his kinsfolk, would be his loyal liegemen and would undertake to keep good account of all the things whereof he was in charge, setting them out orderly, labelling them well and truly, to the end that when Gargantua should come to carry out an inspection, he should find the finances and the store of victuals all in perfect order. All this had the complexion of truth upon it. Howbeit the hapless shrew-mouse, despite this fine arrangement, was sore disturbed by intimations from above and stirrings of his shrew-mousical conscience. Perceiving that he had lost his mirth and trailed about in lamentable fashion, and anxious concerning her master's anxiety, one fine morning, by way of a jest, the mouseling who was already bearing the burden of his handiwork, bethought herself of a means of calming his doubts and appeasing his soul by a right academic consultation whereto she summoned the learned doctors of the land. Therefore, during the day, she brought unto him the Sieur Evegault, who had come forth from a

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round of cheese, where he dwelt as in a hermitage, an old ratacunnicated confessor of high standing, a well favoured old wight, with a fine black robe, square as a tower, slightly tonsured on the crown of the head by a cat's claw. 'Twas a rat of solemn mien, with a monkish look. All the learned scientific authorities had he studied, devouring the various Decretaliformed parchments and Clementinian documents, and tomes of every kind, whereof some portions had overflowed and stained his grey beard. And so by reason of the great honour and reverence in which he was held for his exalted virtue and wisdom and for the meekness and humility of his life in the cheese, he was attended by a troop of black rats, each accompanied by a deliciously fascinating little mouseling of his own, for the Canons of the Council of Chezil had not yet been adopted, and it was still lawful for them to take to themselves ladies of repute for their concubines. Now all the aforesaid richly endowed and comfortably circumstanced rats and mice were ranged along in a double row, so that you might have thought you were witnessing a University procession passing on its way to convocation. And all the company were nosing and sniffing about for victuals.

Now when each and all of them had taken their seats in due order for the ceremony, the old cardinal of the rats rose up to speak and delivered an oration in mouse Latin in order to prove to the shrew-mouse that, under God, there existed no one greater than he, and that he was responsible to none save God. Then followed a wealth of fine phrases, all bedecked and bedizened with

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scriptural quotations designed to cloud the issue and bedazzle the audience; a fine array of arguments diversified with many gaps for common sense. And this brave oration was brought to a conclusion with a peroration resounding with magnificent flourishes in honour of shrew-mice, among whom the one there present was the most renowned and the best that ever there had been under the sun; and lo, the guardian of the granary was completely bedazzled thereby.

This worthy gentleman had his head turned by this magnificent discourse, and gave all these mealy-mouthed orators most comfortable quarters where, night and day, they chanted golden eulogies and melodious hymns in his honour, not forgetting to sing the praises of his lady, whose hand they would kiss, everyone of them, and sniff about her favours. And last of all, the mistress of the household, bethinking herself that there were still some young rats that lacked victuals to satisfy their hunger, was fain to set the seal upon her work. So she made good use of her tongue, giving utterance to little loverlike complaints and playing off countless numbers of those little alluring tricks whereof a single one would have been enough to make a wight go off his head. For she represented to the shrew-mouse that he was for ever wasting the time they might have spent in love by all the time he spent in maintaining order and keeping an eye on the things committed to his charge; that he was for ever going here and going there, and that she never had her full quota of him; that when she needed him, he was always prancing along the gut-

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ters, rushing after the cats; and, finally, that she would fain have him ever nigh unto her, always ready as a lance and gentle as a turtle-dove. Whereupon, with great show of pain, she pulled forth a grey hair, deeming herself the most unhappy mouse that ever was, and burst into a flood of tears. And thereupon the shrew-mouse pointed out to her, that she was mistress over everything, and endeavoured to put her to silence; but after the lady had treated him to another outburst of weeping, he implored a truce and asked her to tell him what she wanted. Thereat she soon dried her tears, and giving him her fingers to kiss, she told him to get some soldiers together and give them arms; right good and well tried rats, old condottieri, trusty blades who would go the rounds and do the watches. And so it was ordained, even as she had said. The shrew-mouse had all the rest of the day to dance, to jig, to pirouette, give ear to the roundelays and ballades which the poets composed for him, play on the lute and the mandolin, do acrostics, eat and drink his bellyful. One day, his mistress, rising from childbed after having brought forth the most delightful little mousified shrew or shrewified mouse, for I know not how to call this little product of love's alchemy which you may be quite sure that the lawyer tribe legitimised (the Constable de Montmorency who had wedded his son to a legitimised bastard of the same King's, put his hand on his sword and gripped the hilt most ferociously) there was held such a feast in the granary, the like of which had never been seen before; a feast which was incomparably more splen-



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did than any other gala or festival known to man, not excepting even the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In every corner the mice disported themselves. Everywhere there were all manner of dances, concerts, drinking parties, festivals, sarabands, music, songs and junketings, bridal hymns. The rats had stove in the pots, unsealed the jars, uncorked the demi-johns, played havoc with the reserves. The hams were everywhere, mustard flowed in rivers. Everything dripped, flowed, pissed and glided, and the young rats dabbled and paddled in rivers of green sauce. The mice voyaged along on sugar. The elders clutched at the pasties. Weasels rode astride salted ox-tongues. Some swam about in the pots and pans, and the cunningest among them conveyed the wheat into their own special holes, profiting by the uproar of the feast to lay in ample stocks. No one passed by the quince cake of Orleans without honouring it with one bite and often with two. In a word, 'twas like the throng and press of a Roman Carnival. Whosoever had a delicate ear would have heard the fri-fri of the fritter-lings, the cries and clamours of the kitchen places, the flip-flap of the ovens, the pang-pong of the mortars, the gloo-gloo of the saucepans, the hiss-hiss of the turnspits, the hanneckination of the baskets and paniers, the frou-frou of the pastries, the clickety-click of the spits, and the little feet trotting pitter-patter like hail along the floors. 'Twas mighty busy revelry, with all the people of the household rushing hither and thither; the feeding folk, the footmen, the stablemen, the musicians, the jesters, all shouting together, with the kettle-drums of



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the soldiers and the murmurs of the three monastic Orders to boot. In short, so wild was the joy, that everyone joined in and gave full rein to his merriment to celebrate this glorious night. But on a sudden was heard the awful sound of the footsteps of Gargantua who was mounting the stairs of his abode, making his way to the granary and causing the beams, ceiling and all to tremble. Certain old rats made enquiry as to the cause of this noise, and as none had any knowledge of the lordly footstep, certain among them, being seized with great fear, decamped incontinent. And they did well, for on a sudden his lordship stood before them. So, taking note of the uproar and confusion among messieurs the rats, seeing also his conserves and all his vessels emptied, his mustards and sauces poured abroad, all conshitted and gallefretted, stamped his foot down on the sportive vermin to crush them, without giving them time to cry out; and thus he played the deuce with their fair satin gowns, their pearls, velvets, laces, and marred the feast.

“And what befell the shrew-mouse?” asked the King, as though waking from a dream.

“Ha! Sire,” answered Rabelais, “here is an instance of Gargantuan injustice. He was put to death. But inasmuch as he was a gentleman, he had his head cut off. That was an ill deed, since he himself had been hoodwinked.”

“You are going pretty far, my fine fellow!” said the King.

“No, Sire,” answered Rabelais, “but I am flying

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pretty high. Didn't you yourself raise the pulpit above the throne? You asked me for a sermon: I have given you one as befits a true Evangelist."

"My fine Court Chaplain," whispered Madame Diane in his ear, "suppose I were to turn spiteful?"

"Madame," replied Rabelais, "was it not high time to forewarn the King, your master, against the Italian friends of the Queen-Mother, who swarm about the place like locusts?"

"Unhappy preacher," whispered Cardinal Odet in his ear, "get you gone into another land!"

"Ah, my lord Cardinal," answered our worthy friend, "a little while, and I shall be in another land, a very different land indeed!"

"God's love, my biblical friend!" exclaimed the Constable whose son, as all the world knows, had traitorously abandoned Mademoiselle de Piennes, to whom he was betrothed, in order to wed Diane de France, daughter of a lady on the hither side of the mountains and of the King. "Who gave you the courage to level your satire at persons so exalted? Aha! my sorry poet! You would fain rise up in the scale. Well, I give you my word of honour, I'll make you rise high indeed!"

"We shall all come to it in time, my Lord Constable," answered our friend. "But if you are a friend of King and Country, you will thank me for having drawn attention to the dark doings of the people of Lorraine, which are the sort of rats to ruin everything."

"Friend," whispered the Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, "if there be any need of a few golden crowns to

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bring out into the daylight the fifth book of your Pantagruel, they shall be counted out to you from my treasury, for that you have spoken roundly to that old rascal who has got hold of the King, and likewise to his parasites."

"Well now, gentlemen," said the King, "what think you of this sermon?"

"Sire," said Mellin de Saint-Gelais, seeing that everybody was pleased, "never did I give ear to a better Pantagruelian prognostication. But truly, it was to be expected from him who made these leonine verses in the Abbey of Thelema:

'Cy vous *entrez*, qui le saint Évangile  
En sens *agile* annoncez, quoy qu'on gronde,  
Céans *aurez* ung refuge et bastille  
Contre l'*hostile* erreur qui tant postille  
Par son faux *style* empoisonner le monde.'"

All the courtiers, with one accord, sang the praises of their neighbour. Everyone belauded Rabelais, who took his departure in great state, accompanied by the King's pages who, by express command, carried torches to light him on his way.

There be some who have accused Rabelais, the imperial glory of our land, of playing scurvy monkey-tricks, unworthy of this philosophic Homer, of this prince of wisdom, of this paternal centre whence are issued, since the rising of his subterranean light, such a number of marvellous works. A murrain on such as have conshitted his godlike head. May they all their life long

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find gravel in the teeth, they who have spurned his wise, wholesome nutriment!

Dear drinker of plain water, faithful observer of monastic fasts, pundit of twenty-five carats, how you would laugh and splutter for all eternity if, revisiting for the nonce, the glimpses of the moon in Chinonnais, 'twere granted you to peruse the cretinous babblings, the ratacunnicated bribble-brabble of all the egregious fools who have interpreted, commented upon, rent asunder, beshamed, conskited, betrayed, murdered, bedizened and embroidered your work in an unheard-of fashion.

As numerous as the dogs that Panurge found busy with his lady's gown in the church, a host of ballockless, brainless pedants, with never a hint of liveliness in their diaphragm, have cast their slaver over your soaring marmorean pyramid wherein are stored forever all the seeds of fantastic and comic invention, not to mention the most magnificent and incomparable lore on every subject under the sun. Though those pilgrims be rare who have wind enough to follow thy bark in her glorious wanderings over the ocean of the ideas, systems, vapourings, religions, sapient theories, sophistries and vain imaginings of the human race, their homage, at the least, rings true; 'tis pure and undefiled, and thy omniscience, omnipotence and omnipar lance are by them well and honestly belauded. 'Tis thus that a poor son of the merry land of Touraine has essayed to pay his tribute to your greatness, humble though that tribute be, by magnifying thy image and glorifying thy works

## DROLL TALES: THE SECOND DECADE

of eternal memory, so dearly cherished by those who love those centripetal, synthetic works in which the whole of the moral universe is compressed; works wherein you may find, like gleaming sardines in their boxes, all the philosophic ideas that ever were, all the sciences, all the arts, every kind of eloquence soever, nay, bating not the mummeries of the theatre.



## LOVE'S DESPAIR



**I**N THE days when King Charles the Eighth conceived the idea of adorning the Château of Amboise, there came in his train certain Italian craftsmen, master sculptors, skilled painters and masons or architects, who wrought works fair to see in the galleries, the which, through neglect, are now fallen into evil case.

And so it befell that the Court was at that time in this pleasant place of sojourn; and, as is well known, the King dearly loved to see the craftsmen at work upon their several labours. Now, among these foreign gentry, there chanced to be a certain Florentine, one Master Angelo Cappara by name, a gentleman of great merit without a rival in the arts of sculpture and engraving; and this notwithstanding his youth, for folk did greatly marvel to see him in the April of his days and already so proficient. For in truth, the hairs which impart to a man the imprint of virile majesty had scarce begun to show themselves upon his skin. Now with this same Angelo the ladies were all in love, for he was beauteous as a dream, melancholy as a lonely turtle dove mourning the death of its mate. And this is wherefore he was sad. This sculptor suffered from the grievous malady of poverty, which sorely hindered him in all his undertakings. He lived a hard life, eating little, ashamed of his scanty

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possessions; and so in despair, he fell to employing his talents, desiring, at all costs, to attain to a life of ease, that being the ideal state for all whose souls are pre-occupied. To cut a dash, the Florentine came to Court bravely attired; and then, because he was young and bashful, could not summon up courage to ask pay of the King who, seeing him thus gallantly tricked out, never dreamed but that he was well supplied with all he needed. Knights and ladies, all, were loud in praises of the workman and his work; but of money, none came his way. Everyone, and especially the ladies, deeming him well supplied by nature, considered him sufficiently set off with his comely youthfulness, his long dark hair and bright eyes, and money never entered their minds as they thought on these things and on others not here mentioned. Nor can we say they were wrong, since these things brought fine estates and money too, to many a dashing blade about the Court.

Despite his appearance of extreme youth, Messer Angelo was twenty years of age, and no fool. He had a great heart, much fine poetry in his head and was, moreover, a man of lofty imagination. Nathless, humility dwelt within him, and like all who have to endure poverty and hardship, he marvelled at the way the ignorant folk prospered. And he would deem himself fashioned awry in body or in mind, and kept his thoughts to himself. Nay, there I err; for he would tell them in the chilly night to the shadows, to God, to the Devil, and I know not whom. Then he would fall to lamenting that he had a heart warmer doubtless than

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any other in the world, so that the women fought shy of it as of a red-hot iron. Then he told himself how good it were to have a beautiful woman for a mistress, and how high a place of honour she would hold in his life; and how faithfully he would cling to her; how affectionately he would serve her; how he would study to do her bidding; and how he would strive to dispel with pleasant sport the light clouds of melancholy which, when the skies were gray, might cast their shadows upon her. In short, portraying her dainty form in his imagination, he flung himself at her feet, kissed, fondled, caressed, ate and sucked them with just as much reality as a prisoner races across country when he peeps through his grating at the meadows outside. Then he spoke to her to awaken her tenderness; next, taking her in his arms, he would almost smother her in his embrace, taking some little liberties with her, despite his respect, biting everything in his bed, in the fury of his passion; a dashing fellow when he was by himself, but tame enough next day when he met a lady face to face.

Nathless, all afire with his wild dreams of love, he set to work anew to chip and hammer at his marble figures, and carved nipples so pretty they would have made your mouth water for such luscious fruits of love, not to mention other things besides which he rounded and shaped and caressed with his chisel, modelling everything so skilfully as to make its use evident to the veriest innocent and straightway cure him of his innocence. And not one of the ladies but would recognize herself in these beautiful statues; and they all lost their hearts to



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Messer Cappara. And Messer Cappara ogled them with his eyes, and swore that the day one of them should give him her finger to kiss, he would have the rest into the bargain.

Now among these dames of high degree there was one who, on a day, did make enquiry of this gentle son of Florence, asking him wherefore he did thus hold himself aloof, and whether there was no woman about the Court who could tame him to her will. Then right graciously, she did invite him to come to visit her at eventide.

And so what did Messer Angelo do but forthwith cover him with perfume, buy him a velvet cape all lined with satin, borrow from a friend a cloak with wide sleeves, a slashed doublet and silken stockings. And so, arriving at the house, he mounts the stairs hot-foot, his bosom full of hope, knowing not what to do with his heart, which leapt and bounded like a mountain goat. In a word, so deep in love was he, from his head to his heels, that his spine was a-wet with the sweat of it.

Oh, but I promise you, the dame was a pretty one! And of her beauties Messer Cappara took the better count, sith, from his sculptor's trade, he knew full well about the mouldings of the arms, the lines of the body, the hidden beauties of the buttock parts and other mysteries besides. Now, this lady gave full satisfaction to all that an artist could demand; and besides being fair and slim, she had a voice that would bring the dead to life, how low soever it were lying, a voice to stir the heart and brain and I know not what besides. In a word,

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she made you think about all manner of things without seeming to give a thought to them herself, which is just the way with these accursed females.

The sculptor found her seated by the fireside, in a high chair. The lady forthwith fell to discoursing right easily, but the hapless Master Angelo could find nought to reply but "Yes" and "No." Not a word could he find in his gullet; not a thought in his brain-pan; and he would have butted his addled pate against the chimney-piece had it not been for the joy he had in listing to the prattle and gazing on the beauty of his fair mistress, who disported herself like a midge in a ray of sunshine.

And sith, by reason of this silent admiration, the pair of them lingered until the midnight hour, adventuring with little steps, along the flowery path of love, the worthy sculptor departed with joy in his heart. And as he went his way, he pondered within him, saying that if a noble woman kept him so mighty nigh to her kirtle for four hours of the night, she wouldn't care a rush if she kept him there till morning. Deducing from these premises not a few pleasing corollaries, he resolved to appeal to her simple womanhood to grant him the favours that you wot of. And as he thought thereon, it entered his head that he would slay them all, the husband, the wife, or himself, if he failed to spin an hour of pleasure with his distaff's aid. In truth, so deep in love was he, that he counted life itself a trifling thing where love was concerned; for a single day of love he deemed was worth a thousand lives.

What time the Florentine gentleman chipped away at

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his marble, he suffered his thoughts to wander on his evening's entertainment; and thus he ruined many a nose, while his mind was elsewhere. Seeing 'twas but ill work he was doing, he set aside his task, bescented himself, and went to enjoy the sweet converse of his lady-love with hopes that he would bring her to suit the action to the word. But no sooner was he in the presence of his sovereign, than her feminine majesty shown forth in all her glory, and the luckless Cappara, who in the street had felt himself such a dashing blade, grew tame as a sheep when he came face to face with his victim.

But all this notwithstanding, towards the hour when love's desires grow heated, it fell out that he had almost slipped the dainty dame beneath him, and held her tightly in his arms. He had bargained for a kiss, and had taken it; whereat he rejoiced: for women, when they grant kisses, retain the right to withhold them; but when they suffer them to be stolen, a lover may snatch a thousand. 'Tis wherefore they are wont to suffer everything to be stolen from them. Now the Florentine had stolen a good few, and matters were progressing with perfect smoothness, when the lady, who had been doling out the merchandise little by little, suddenly exclaimed, "My husband!"

And in sooth, my lord had just returned from playing a game of tennis, and the sculptor was compelled to decamp, though not without the luscious glance of a lady interrupted in her bliss. This was all his dole, pittance and enjoyment for a month; for it so fell out that whenever he was about to taste the fruits of his delight,

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the aforesaid master husband would appear on the scene always arriving most thoughtfully between a blank refusal and those little sweet cooings with which the ladies are wont to soften their rebuffs; little delicacies which give new fire to love and make it still more fierce. And whereas the impatient sculptor, the very moment he arrived, immediately set about to storm the stronghold of the skirt, in order to take it or ever the husband should arrive (sith he doubtless profited by this stirring-up of his household goods) my pretty lady, so soon as she saw the flames of desire gleaming in the sculptor's eyes, fell to such wrangling as you would think 'twould never end. To begin with, she would pretend to be jealous, so that she might listen to the harsh words of an angry lover; then she would appease the wrath of the little dear with the moisture of a kiss; then she would fall to talking and never leave off, saying that a lover of hers ought to remain good, and do as she willed, or she could not love him with her whole heart and soul. And that to stifle a desire was a small sacrifice to make for a woman; and that she herself exceeded him in courage, seeing that, as her love was greater, her sacrifice was greater too. Then, on a sudden, like a wrathful Queen, she would cry, "Hands off that!" Then, from time to time, she would assume a peevish air and answer Capara's reproaches saying, "If you are not as I would have you be, I shall love you no more."

In short, a little late in the day, the luckless Italian perceived that this was no grand passion; by no means one of those love affairs in which joy is not eked out as a



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miser ekes out his money. It was borne in on him that this fair lady liked to keep him dangling about the outskirts, and was quite willing to let him imagine himself master of everything, provided he touched not the inner sanctuary of love. This was a game that put Master Angelo beside himself with fury; and, gathering about him some twenty companions, good friends of his, he bade them set upon the husband on the road he would take as he came home to sleep after the King's tennis-party. He himself came to his mistress at the accustomed hour. And when love's sweet sport was merrily proceeding, the which consisted of kisses royally savoured, tresses twined and untwined, hands bitten with love's fury, ay, and ears into the bargain; in short, all the customary give and take bating only that one single thing which godly writers hold to be abominable, and with good reason, lo, our Florentine blurts out between two kisses that were somewhat over-long:

"My chuck, dost love me more than all the world?"

"That do I," she answered, bethinking herself that words cost nothing.

"Well then," said her lover, "be mine in very deed."

"Nay," answered she, "my husband will be here in a moment."

"'Tis only that prevents thee?"

"'Tis only that!"

"Nay, but I have friends will stop him on his way and will not suffer him to proceed until I put a lighted torch here within this window. And if he makes complaint unto our lord the King, my friends will say they







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did but think to play a trick on one of our own boon companions."

"Stay but a moment, dear," said she, "the while I see that all is still without and all the folks abed."

So saying, she rose and set a light beside the window. Master Angelo saw what she was at, blew out the candle, seized his sword, and planting himself before the woman, whose perfidy was now as plain as day, he cried:

"I will not slay thee, Madame, but verily, I'll mar thy features so that never more shalt thou play the fool with hapless young lovers and put their lives in danger. Shamefully hast thou tricked me! Thou art an evil woman! Thou knowest that a kiss can never be forgotten by a man of loyal heart; and a mouth that is kissed is but an earnest of the rest. You have made life a poisonous and an evil thing to me for ever; therefore I will see to it that thou shalt ever remember my death, whereof thou art the cause. And, in very sooth, thou shalt never look in thy mirror without seeing my face likewise reflected there."

So saying, he raised his arm and brandished his sword as though to hack off a goodly slice of those lovely cheeks whereon there still lingered the imprint of his kisses. Whereupon the lady called him an evil-hearted wight.

"Peace!" he cried. "You told me you loved me more than all the world. Now you sing a different tune! Each evening, you drew me up a little nearer heaven; and now, at a blow, you fling me into the depths of hell; and

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you think your woman's kirtle will save you from a lover's wrath. I tell you, NO!"

"Oh, Angelo, I am thine!" she cried, amazed and enchanted at such a blaze of anger.

But he recoiled three paces, crying:

"Out on thee, worthless scum of the Court; thou evil-hearted thing! So thou lovest thy face better than thou lovest thy lover, is't not so?"

She turned quite pale, and humbly held forth her cheek, for now she understood that her past perfidy did wrong her present love. And then, with a single sweep of his sword, Angelo slashed her across the cheek, quitted the house, and left the country. The husband, who had not been molested, because the Florentines had seen the light in the window, found his wife lacking her left cheek; but she breathed not a word despite the pain she suffered; for since her lover had slashed her face, she loved him more dearly than her life. Nathless, the husband insisted on knowing how she had come by the wound. Now, inasmuch as no one had come to the house, save the Florentine, he laid a complaint before the King, who caused his workman to be pursued and arrested, and gave orders that he should be hanged: the which was done at Blois. The day the hanging was to take place, a noble dame was minded to save the life of this man of courage whom she deemed one able to give a good account of himself as a lover. She begged the King to hand him over to her, to the which he did right graciously consent. But Angelo declared that he could love none other than his lady, whose memory he could

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in no wise banish from his mind. Therefore he turned a monk, became a Cardinal, a great scholar, and was wont to declare, in his old days, that he had been kept alive by the memory of the joys he had tasted in those sorry hours of suffering when he had received at once such good and evil treatment at his lady's hands.

Some chroniclers there be who do aver that in after times he went much farther than the petticoat, and that the lady's cheek did marvellously grow whole again. But this I cannot well believe; for he was a man of noble heart who had exalted notions concerning the sacred joys of love.

This story points no useful moral unless it be to tell us that you can run up against some evil things in life; for this tale is true in every respect. If, elsewhere, the Author ever accidentally overstepped the truth, this tale should earn him the indulgent regard of all lovers.





## THE SUCCUBUS



## PROLOGUE

CERTAIN dwellers, in the noble country of Touraine, greatly struck with the ardent researches carried on by the Author into the antiquities, adventures, doughty deeds and pleasant pastimes of that happy region, and deeming, for sure, that he must have taken all knowledge for his province, did enquire of him, of course after drinking a bout, whether he had discovered the etymological reason, which all the dames of the city were mighty curious to learn, wherefore a certain street in Tours was named the rue Chaulde, or Hot Street. Whereupon he made answer to them and said that he marvelled greatly to see that the older inhabitants of the place had grown forgetful of the many convents situated in the said street, and that the rigorous continence of the monks and nuns within them had so superheated the walls thereof, that certain highly respectable ladies had found themselves with child merely by walking down the said street something too leisurely at eventide.

One clownish fellow, thinking to pass for a learned man, said that, in the old days, all the stews of the town were contained within this neighbourhood. Another wight adventured himself among the mazy tortuosities

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of science and spake right eloquently—though no one understood him—qualifying his words most carefully, awakening the chords of antique melodies, and new ones to boot, collating usages, distilling verbs, alchymizing all the languages ever spoken since the Flood by Hebrews, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, concluding with Turnus who founded Tours; and at last this worthy asserted that *Chaulde*—disregarding the “*b*” and the “*l*”—came from *Cauda*, the Latin for tail or appendage, and that such an instrument played a big part in the matter. The only part of his discourse understood by the ladies was the tail of it.

One elderly wight said that on this spot, in times long past, there had existed a thermal spring, affirming that his great-grandfather had drunk thereof. In short, in less time than it takes a fly to pin his lady-love, there was a pouchful of derivations in which it would have puzzled you more to find the truth than to disentangle a louse from the foul beard of a Capuchin monk. After him a right learned man, well known as having paced the cloisters of many a monastery, burnt freely of the midnight oil, stove in many a volume and collected together more fragments, diptychal pieces, layettes, records and registers concerning the history of Touraine than a harvester can gather cornstalks in August—this old fellow, then, bent double and gouty, who sat drinking in his corner without saying a word, smiled a knowing smile as he lowered his eyebrows, which smile terminated and resolved itself into a very definite and clearly articulated—Pshaw! which the Author heard



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and concluded to be pregnant with a thumping historic tale, the which he might include in this pleasant collection.

Next day the gouty one spake to him and said:

“By that poem of thine intituled *The Venial Sin*, thou didst win my undying esteem; for all that is set down therein is true from beginning to end, the which I hold to be a rare and priceless superabundance in such matters. But doubtless you know not the fate that befell the little Moorish girl who took the veil at the instance of Messire Bruyn de la Roche Corbon? Now to me 'tis known! Wherefore, if the etymological origin of this street-name doth interest you, and likewise the fate of your Egyptian nun, I will lend thee a right ancient and most curious document which I did chance upon among the ancient records of the Archbishopric—a document whereby the libraries were not a little fluttered at a time when none of us knew overnight whether he would still have his head on his shoulders next morning. Now will not this put you in a mighty good humour?”

“Marry, it will!” quoth the Author.

Thereupon this worthy collector of true facts handed over certain goodly and dusty parchments to the Author which he hath, not without great trouble, translated into French, and which were records of ecclesiastical procedure of very ancient date. He considered that nothing could be more diverting than the complete resurrection of that ancient affair in which the ingenuous candour of the good old days is so conspicuously displayed. So now, perpend! Here follow in their order the said

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writings, whereof the Author hath made what use he might, for the language thereof was mighty hard to conquer.

## I. THE NATURE AND CONSTITUTION OF A SUCCUBUS

✱ *In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

**I**N THE year of Our Lord one thousand two hundred and seventy-one, before me Hiérosme Cornille, Grand Inquisitor, Judge of the Ecclesiastical Courts, thereunto commissioned by the Chapter of Saint Maurice, the Cathedral Church of Tours, having taken counsel in the presence of our Lord Jehan de Monsoreau, Archbishop, on the grievances and complaints of the inhabitants of the city whose petition will be found annexed to these presents: there appeared certain witnesses, nobles, burgesses and villeins of the diocese, who gave evidence as follows concerning the behaviour of a demon who is suspected of having taken on the appearance of a woman, and who hath caused heavy affliction of spirit to the folk of the diocese; this said demon being now under lock and key in the gaol of the Chapter House.

Now, in order to arrive at the truth in this matter, we have instituted the present inquisition this Monday, the eleventh day of December, after Mass, in order that the statements of each witness may be communicated to the said demon, who will be duly interrogated concerning

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the facts imputed to it; judgment following in due course, in accordance with the provisions of the law *contra daemonios*.

In this task, I have engaged the assistance of Guillaume Tournebousche, rubricator to the Chapter, a most learned man.

First of all there came before us Jehan, surnamed Tortebras, citizen of Tours, licensed victualler and landlord of the *Cigoygne* on the Place du Pont, who hath sworn, as he hopes for the salvation of his soul, and holding the holy Gospels in his hand, not to put forward anything save what he himself hath seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. Thus then he saith:

“I declare that about two years ago, come Midsummer Day, whereon the bonfires are wont to be lighted, a gentleman, whom at first I knew not, but whom I soon recognized as belonging to the retinue of our lord the King, and then just returned home from the Holy Land, came to me and proposed that I should let unto him on lease a country house built by me on the capitular estate, hard by the place hight Saint Estienne, the which I did in fact let to him for nine years in consideration of three bezants of fine gold.

“And in this very house did this lord lodge his fair leman, one having indeed all the appearance of a woman, but arrayed in foreign vesture after the manner of the Saracens and Mohammedans. Her would he suffer to be seen by none; neither would he brook that any should come within a bow-shot of her. Howbeit, I myself have seen her, with my own eyes, wearing upon her







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head a strange plumage, and did note the unearthly colour of her skin and of her eyes that blazed in such wise that I lack words to describe them, and from them there shone forth a gleam as of hell-fire.

“The defunct knight, having threatened with instant death any that might seem to be nosing round about the said dwelling, I did, with much fear and trembling, hand over and quit the same house; and to this day, I have secretly harboured in my bosom certain misgivings and doubts concerning the sinister appearance of the aforesaid foreign creature, who was more frolicsome than any upon whom I have hitherto set eyes.

“Many folk of divers conditions, deeming that the said knight was in reality dead, but affirming that he was able to keep on his legs by virtue of certain charms, philtres, incantations and devilish sorceries of this simulacrum of a woman, who was fain to take up her abode in our land, I now declare that whenever I clapped eyes on the said knight, I might well compare his countenance to a waxen taper, and as is well known to all the folk in the hostelry of *La Cigoygne*, the knight was laid in the earth nine days after her coming into the neighbourhood. According to the testimony of his squire, the deceased had lain clasped in the warm embraces of this Moorish baggage for seven whole days, locked up in my house, and never coming forth therefrom, whereof indeed I did hear him make ghastly confession, as he lay moaning upon his death-bed.

“Some folk there were who, at the time, did declare that this same she-devil did lash and bind herself unto

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the noble knight with her long tresses, the which were possessed of certain heat-giving properties whereby, under the form and semblance of love, the fires of hell are communicated unto Christian men, making them toil and labour unceasingly until at length their souls are drawn out from their bodies and swallowed up by the Evil One. But I declare that of this I saw nothing, but only the said knight dead, foredone and withered, powerless to budge, yet longing, despite the admonitions of his confessor, to go back yet again to his leman; and this same lord was recognised to be the Seigneur de Bueil who had fought in the Holy Land and who, as some said, had fallen under the spell of a demon whom he had encountered in the country round about Damascus in Asia, or in some such place.

“Now I left my house in the hands of the strange woman in accordance with the provisions set forth in the lease. But the aforesaid Seigneur de Bueil, being deceased, I did betake myself to my house in order to learn of the foreign dame whether it was her wish to continue the tenancy of my dwelling and, after much ado, I was conducted into her presence by a half-naked foreigner, a black man with exceeding large whites to his eyes. And I beheld the Moorish woman, clad in vesture blazing with gold and precious stones, seated in the glow of many lights, reclining upon an Eastern rug, and very lightly clad, in company with another gentleman who was fast losing his immortal soul. And lo! I had not the courage to look upon her, for her eyes would have incited me to yield me to her forthwith, for already her

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voice was tingling in my entrails, taking possession of my brain and debauching my soul. Perceiving this, and from fear of God, ay and eke of Hell, I fled away incontinent, leaving her my house for as long as she cared to keep it, so great a peril it was to look upon her Moorish skin where devilish heats did lurk in ambush (not to mention a foot tinier than any of which a real woman could lawfully boast) and to list to her voice, which went straight to the heart. And from that day to this, I have had no desire to return to my house, being in great fear lest I should fall into the snares of the Evil One. I have said."

Next, before the aforesaid Tortebras, was brought an Abyssinian, Nubian or Ethiopian gentleman who, black from head to foot, was discovered to be lacking in those virile appurtenances wherewith all Christian men are commonly endowed. He, having persevered in his silence, after being put several times to the torture, was at length, after much groaning, recognised as being unable to speak the language of our country. And the said Tortebras did identify the said Abyssinian heretic as the man who was in his house in company with the demon spirit, and had been suspected of participating in the practice of the black art. Then did Tortebras confess himself a true Catholic and affirm that he knew nought else, bating certain gossip which was common property and of which he had himself no cognisance as an eyewitness, having only heard the things reported.

Next, having been duly cited to attend the court, came Mathieu, commonly called Cognefestu, a labourer,

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dwelling in the suburbs of Saint Estienne, who, having been sworn upon the Holy Gospels, confessed to us that he had always beheld a great deal of light in the house of the foreign woman, and had heard a hubbub of wild and diabolical laughter, both by night and day, on feast days and fast days, and notably during Easter and Christmas, as if a great number of people were gathered together in the said house. Next he stated that he had seen, in and about the windows thereof, in winter, great masses of fresh green foliage that had sprung up and burgeoned forth as if by magic. Ay, roses bloomed in profusion, though all the land was gripped by frost; and many other things flourished too, which usually require much warmth to bring them on. But all this amazed no one, for such a heat did burn and glow within the stranger woman, that when she walked at eventide beside her garden wall, all manner of green stuffs for the salad would be found next morn, uprisen from the soil; and sometimes, merely by brushing her skirt against their boles, she had caused the sap to awaken and bound upwards in the trees and thus hurried on their budding time. More than this Cognefestu said he knew not, seeing that he was ever at work from early morn and lay him down to rest so soon as ever his chickens went to roost.

Next, the wife of the aforesaid Cognefestu was called upon to state, likewise upon oath, the things whereof she had cognizance in this affair; and she said nought save in praise of the foreigner, for that ever since her coming into those parts, she herself had been kindlier







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treated by her husband because of the proximity of this good dame who spread love about her in the air, even as the sun spreadeth abroad his rays, and she spake of other incongruous and marvellous manifestations which we cannot and will not set down here.

With the said Cognefestu and his wife, we confronted the unknown African, of whom mention has afore been made; he who was seen by them in the garden of the house and was stated by them with certainty to belong to the demon woman.

Thirdly, there came forward Messire Harduin V, lord of Maillé, who being respectfully called upon by us to illumine the religion of the Church, made answer that it was his will so to do, and swore upon his honour, as a true knight, to speak of nought save what he had seen with his own eyes.

Then spake he and declared that he had known the demon in question when he was fighting in the Crusades and that, when in the city of Damascus, he had seen the knight of Bueil—since deceased—fighting in single combat to be her sole possessor. The aforesaid strumpet or demon belonged, at that time, to Sire Geoffroy IV, Lord of Roche-Pozay, who gave out that he had brought her from Touraine, albeit she was a Saracen. The Knights of France did as greatly marvel at this statement as they did at her beauty, which was the source of much rumour and many scandalous riotings in the camp. During the journey, this wanton was the cause of many murders, since la Roche-Pozay had already discomfited several Crusaders who had striven to keep her for themselves

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because, according to certain knights whom she had requited and regaled in secret, she gave delights like to no others ever known. But in the end, the Sire de Bueil, having slain Geoffroy de la Roche-Pozay, became lord and master of this murderous sword-sheath and thrust her into a sort of Saracen convent or harem. But before this took place, she had been seen and heard delivering herself, at her joyous entertainments, of countless outlandish and foreign turns of speech—Arabic, Greek of the Roman Empire, the language of the Moors, and, besides these, French, which she spake as readily as any the most proficient in that tongue in all the Christian host—whence came the belief that she was, in sooth, a demon.

The Sire Harduin avowed that he had never jousted for her in the Holy Land; not by reason of fear or indifference, or any thing of the kind. But he held that this happy fate had been his for that he did ever carry, on his person, a portion of the True Cross, and also because he had always with him a noble lady of the Grecian land who preserved him from such perils by denuding and emptying him of love, night and morning, taking from him all the substance thereof, leaving nothing in his heart, or elsewhere, for any others whatsoever.

And this same lord did assure us that the woman, who had her abode in the country house of Tortebras, was, of a truth, the said Saracen, come thither from the land of Syria, because he had been bidden to a merry-making there by the young lord of Croixmare, who gave up the ghost on the seventh day following. According to

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the statement of the lady of Croixmare, his mother, he had been utterly foredone and brought to nought by the said baggage, whose contact had consumed all his vital spirit, and whose whims and caprices had devoured all his worldly substance.

Thereafter, requested as a true knight and a man of wisdom and authority in the neighbourhood, to state what he really thought concerning the woman, and called upon by us to discover what he did, in his inmost conscience, believe concerning her, since the matters at stake were no less than to unmask a seeming horrible crime, to preserve the Christian faith and to maintain divine justice, the noble lord did make answer as follows:

Some there were (he said) in the Christian host who had told him that this devil of a woman always came as a virgin to every man who had commerce with her and that, for a certainty, Mammon was in her, and took care to make her a fresh maidenhead for each successive lover.

But of a surety, the old knight being stricken in years, and heeding no more the pleasures of his young days, did, nathless, feel conscious of a most marvellous youthful sensation at that supper with which the young Sire de Croixmare had regaled him. He said that the voice of the diabolical little baggage went straight to his heart or ever it had glided in at his ears, and had awakened so great a love-heat within him, that all his virility did throng and press to that place whence it is wont to issue and jet forth, and lastly, that had it not been for the Cyprus wine whereof he had drunk so that he might



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close his eyes and lay him down to slumber beneath the bench, for he was fain to look no more on the flaming eyes of his hostess, and to avoid losing his immortal soul in the quicksands of her being, he would assuredly have discomfited the young Croixmare, so that for once, at least, he might taste the sweets of this supernatural woman. But since then he had been at pains to make confession of all these his evil thoughts. And, in accordance with an admonition from on high, he had asked his wife to restore unto him his piece of the True Cross, and had remained resolutely within his manor where, however, despite all these Christian precautions, that marvellous voice would sometimes come and dance its magic rounds within his brain; and oft times of a morning, he would bethink him of that little she-devil of a woman who burnt and glowed with all the heat of a blazing torch. And forasmuch as the sight of the baggage produced such violent heats that it made him burn and burgeon like a young man—albeit he had one foot in the grave—and because it caused him such a great overflowing and effluxion of his vital spirits, the said old lord did pray and beseech us not to confront him with this mighty queen of love on whom God the Father (unless indeed it were the Devil) had conferred strange and potent rights and prerogatives over the things of men. Then, when his evidence had been duly read over to him, he did retire, not, however, before he had identified the African native aforesaid as being the servitor and attendant of the foreign lady.

Now, fourthly, upon our making solemn oath, in the

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name of the Chapter and His Grace the Archbishop, that he should not be tortured, tormented or molested anywhere, or in any manner, or be called upon again, after he had given his evidence, in view of the journeys he had to make in the course of his business; and promise having been made to him that he should be suffered to depart without let or hindrance, there came before us a certain Jew, by name Solomon al Rastchild, who, despite the infamy attaching to his person and his creed, was by us accepted as a witness, for that it was our sole purpose to gather all the information we could concerning the conduct of the aforesaid demon. Nor was any oath exacted from the aforesaid Solomon, inasmuch as he was without the pale of the Church and sundered from us by the blood of our Saviour. (*Trucidatus Salvator inter nos.*)

On being questioned by us as to wherefore he appeared before us without the green bonnet and the yellow wheel over his heart, which the royal and ecclesiastical regulations required, the said al Rastchild produced letters-patent, granted him by our lord the King and countersigned by the Seneschal of Touraine and Poictou, exempting him from such observances.

The said Jew did declare unto us that he had transacted much business on behalf of the lady, who was staying in the house of Tortebras, the tavern-keeper; that he had sold her golden candelabra with many branches cunningly chased, dishes of silver-gilt, goblets enriched with precious stones, emeralds and rubies; that he had obtained for her from the Levant a quan-

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tity of costly stuffs, Persian rugs, silks and fine linen; in brief, things of such magnificence, that there was never a queen in the whole of Christendom who could boast that she was so well supplied with jewels and household trappings. And that for his share in all these transactions, he had received three hundred thousand livres of Tours for the valuables she had purchased through his agency, such as Indian flowers, papagays, birds, feathers, spices, Greek wine and diamonds.

Required by us, the judge in the case, to state whether he had furnished her with any ingredients for a magic cauldron, such as the blood of a new-born babe, hieroglyphic writing or any other of those things whereof sorcerers are wont to make use, giving him free leave to unfold his story, and promising that whatever he might avow, he would never be questioned or molested in any way, the said al Rastchild did swear and make oath in the Jewish fashion, that never in any wise was he party to such commerce. He added, indeed, that he was concerned in interests of too important a character, to have aught to do with such fiddle-faddles, sith he was money-broker to divers mighty puissant lords, such as the Marquis de Montferrat, the King of England, the King of Cyprus and Jerusalem, the Count of Provence, my lords of Venice, and other folk of Germany; that he did own argosies of all kinds going to and from Egypt under the protection of the Sultan, and that he trafficked for precious objects wrought of gold and silver, which often caused him to visit the Mint at Tours. Further, he volunteered the statement that he consid-

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ered the woman in question to be right honest, a natural woman; the most softly rounded and the most delicious he had ever seen. He likewise stated that, because of her reputation as a demoniac, and because of his dare-devil spirit, and also because he had a prodigious lech on her, he did, one day when she chanced to be a "widow," propose to her that he should be her gallant for the nonce; and that she did most willingly comply.

Now, albeit after this night's toil he did feel all his bones disjoined and his loins o'erwearied, it was not his experience, as others maintained it was theirs, that whoso fell once in that place never came forth again but sank therein like lead in an alchemist's crucible.

Then the aforesaid Solomon, to whom we allowed his freedom, in accordance with the safe-conduct, despite his last statement which affords abundant proof of his commerce with the devil, seeing that he came safely out of a place wherein all Christian men succumbed—this Solomon, I say, did submit unto us a covenant with regard to the said demon, whereof the terms were as follows: he did promise and undertake to give unto the Cathedral Chapter such ransom for the said semblance of a woman, as should, in the event of her being condemned to be burnt alive, provide funds sufficient to complete the loftiest of the towers then under construction at the Church of Saint Maurice.

Of this offer we did take due note, so that when occasion arose, it should be submitted to the Chapter in general synod assembled. And the said Solomon slipped away without leaving his address, and said that he



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would be able to learn the result of the Chapter's deliberation through a Jew quartered in the Jewry at Tours, by name Tobias Nathaneus. The aforesaid Jew, to wit Solomon, was confronted, ere he departed, with the African, whom he recognised as the attendant of the demon. He stated that it was a custom with the Saracens thus to geld the slaves whom they intended to set on guard over their women—a usage of ancient origin, as is stated by the writers of profane history (*Vide Narsez, General of Constantinople, and others*).

On the following day, after Mass, there was brought into our presence the fifth witness, namely, the most noble and illustrious Lady of Croixmare. She was duly sworn on the Holy Gospel, and did then declare to us, with tears in her eyes, that she had laid in the grave her first-born son, who had come by his death by reason of his extravagant indulgences with the said female demon. This young nobleman was twenty-three years of age; a fine figure of a man, a very virile fellow, with a heavy beard like his father before him. Notwithstanding his great store of spinal marrow, ninety days of the work had left him pale and shrunken, brought to ruin by his intercourse with the succubus of the rue Chaulde—if the talk of the common people is to be believed. And over this son his mother was powerless to exert her authority. At length, in his last days, he grew like one of those poor withered insects which housewives encounter when they sweep out the rooms of their houses. And ever, as long as he had the strength to go, he went and finished out his days with this devil of a woman,



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where he wasted his substance into the bargain. And then as he lay on his bed and knew that his last hour was drawing nigh, he cursed and swore and threatened, and shouted insults at everyone—sister, brother, ay, and at her, his own mother; spat in the chaplain's face; denied his God, and said he would die the death of the damned; whereat all the servants of the family stood in sore amaze, and in order to save his soul and snatch it from hell-fire, they did found two Masses to be sung annually in the Cathedral. Next, in order that he might be buried in consecrated ground, the family of Croixmare did covenant to furnish the Chapter, for one hundred years, with wax for chapels and church on Easter Day. But, save for the wicked words uttered in the hearing of the Reverend Dom Loys Pot, a monk of Marmoustiers, who came to tend the said Baron de Croixmare in his dying moments, the lady, his mother, affirms that she never heard the deceased utter any words concerning the demon that had him in thrall.

Having thus spoken, the said noble and illustrious dame did depart in sore affliction of spirit.

Sixthly, there appeared before us, on the reassembling of the Court, Jacqueline, commonly called Vieul-Oing, a scullery-woman, who went about from house to house to wash up the dishes, now dwelling in la Poissonnerie, who having sworn to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, declared as follows: One day, when she had come into the kitchen of the said demon—of whom she was in no wise afraid, seeing that she only fed upon males—she had been able

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to espy, in the garden, the female demon most sumptuously attired, walking side by side with a knight with whom she was laughing and joking like any the most natural woman in the world. Then it was that she had recognized in her a true likeness to the Moorish girl who had taken the veil in the convent of Notre-Dame de l'Esgrignolles at the intervention of the deceased Seneschal of Touraine and Poitou, Messire Bruyn, Count of La Roche-Corbon, the which Moorish girl had been left behind in lieu and stead of the image of Our Lady the Virgin, the Mother of Our Blessed Saviour, that had been stolen and carried off by the Egyptians about eighteen years before. At that time, whereof no records exist by reason of the troubles that had come about in Touraine, this same wench, aged about twelve, was saved from the stake, where she was to have been burnt, by receiving baptism; and the said Seneschal and his lady—now both deceased—had stood godfather and godmother to this same daughter of Satan. At that time, the witness, being a laundry-maid in the convent, stated that she remembered the flight which the said Egyptian carried out, twenty months after her profession, with such skill and cunning, that no one has ever discovered, to this day, how it was effected. Everyone, at the time, believed that with the devil's aid, she had ridden away on the air, since despite the most careful searches, no trace could be found that would throw any light on the manner of her escape from the convent, where everything was found to be in its accustomed order.

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The African person having been brought into the presence of the said scullery-maid, she stated that she had never seen him, although she was mightily curious concerning him, seeing that he was put in charge of the place where the Moorish woman did battle with those victims whom she swallowed up by the dozen.

In the seventh place, there was brought before us Hugues du Fou, son of the Sieur de Bridoré who, at the age of twenty years, was handed over to the custody of his father; the latter, on pain of forfeiting his property, was held responsible for the safe keeping of his son; for he, the son, was charged and convicted of having, in company with several ruffians unknown, laid siege to the gaol of the Archbishop and Chapter, and of having conspired to defeat the ends of ecclesiastical justice by procuring the escape of the demon in question. Despite his disinclination so to do, he commanded the said Hugues du Fou to bear truthful witness touching the things which he, perforce, knew concerning the demon with whom he was vehemently alleged to have had commerce; it being impressed upon him that his own salvation and the life of the said demoniac were at stake. He, having taken the oath, declared as follows:

“I swear by my eternal salvation and the Holy Gospels here present in my hand, that I look upon the woman by you suspected of being a demon, as an angel, a perfect woman, still more perfect in soul than in body; living a full honest life, and an adept in the dainty arts and super-refinements of love; in nowise evil, but generous and ever ready to succour the poor and ailing. I

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declare that I beheld her shedding tears of unfeigned grief at the death of my friend the Sire de Croixmare. And because, on that day, she did promise Our Lady the Virgin never more to enlist in the service of love any young noblemen whose strength sufficed not for the rigours of the campaign, she hath constantly and with great courage denied me the enjoyment of her carnal favours and hath granted me only the love and possession of her heart, whereof she hath made me sovereign lord. Since the bestowal of that gracious gift, despite my growing flame, she hath remained alone in her dwelling, where I have spent the greater part of my days, happy if I could but see her and hear her voice. And well did I fare in her house, partaking of the air which entered in at her throat, of the light which illumined her lovely eyes, and taking more delight in this occupation than do the Lords of Paradise. By me chosen to be my lady-love for ever; chosen by me to be one day my dove, my wife, my only friend, I, poor fool, never received from her any instalment of the joys to come; but, on the other hand, all manner of good advice, as for example, that it behoved me to distinguish myself as a doughty knight; become a fine strong man, fear nought, or no one, save God; honour the ladies; serve but one, and love them all in memory and token of that only one; adding that when I should have grown strong and sturdy by reason of the toils of war, if her heart still gave pleasure to my own, then, and not till then, would she be wholly mine, because she was able to wait for me, loving me very dearly."



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So saying, the young Sire Hugues did weep full sore; and weeping still, he added that:

Pondering on this gracious and delicate lady, whose arms he did lately deem almost too dainty to sustain the trifling weight of her golden bracelets, he could not contain himself when he thought on the shackles that were galling and bruising her, and of the hardships which she had been traitorously compelled to endure, and that herein had been the cause of his rebellion. And he went on to say that it was meet and lawful for him to proclaim his grief before the court, for that his life was so closely bound up with the life of this his dainty mistress and friend that, if the day came when ill should befall her, he too would die for a certainty.

And the young man did cry aloud numberless other eulogies of the said demon, the which afford abundant testimony of the witchcraft practised upon him, and furnished ample proof of her abominable, unclean and irremediably evil life and of the sorceries and deceits of which he is the victim; whereof his Grace the Archbishop shall be the judge, if so be he may, by exorcisms and by the imposition of penances, contrive to save the young man's soul from the snares of hell; if, indeed, the devil hath not already made good his foothold within it.

Thereupon we did deliver over the young man into the hands of the noble lord his father, though not until the African had been recognised by the said Hugues as being the serving-man of the accused.

As the eighth witness, the beadles of our lord Archbishop did, with great ceremony, bring before us the



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Very Noble and Reverend Dame Jacqueline de Champchevrier, Abbess of the Convent of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, into whose custody had been delivered, by the late Lord Seneschal of Touraine, the father of the present Comte de la Roche-Corbon, now solicitor to the said convent, the Egyptian woman who had been baptised by the name of Blanche Bruyn.

To the said Lady Abbess we did briefly set forth the present case, explaining the great things that were at stake, to wit, Holy Church, the glory of God, the everlasting welfare of the folk of this diocese so sorely troubled by this demon, and also the life of a creature who might possibly, after all, be altogether innocent. Then, the case having been thus duly stated, we did call upon the said Lady Abbess to give an account of all she knew concerning the magical disappearance of her daughter in God, Blanche Bruyn, who had become a bride of Christ under the name of Sister Claire. Thereupon, the most noble, most exalted and most puissant dame did depone as here followeth:

Sister Claire, whose origin was unknown to her, albeit she was held to be born of heretical parents and enemies of God, had, in accordance with all the prescribed formalities, duly become a nun at the convent, the governance of which had been canonically entrusted to her hands, all unworthy as she was of such an office. The said Sister Claire did well and truly perform the duties of her novitiate and took her vows in accordance with the sacred rules of the Order. But no sooner had she made these vows than she fell into a great melan-





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choly and grew very pale and wan. Questioned by her, the Lady Abbess, as to her melancholic condition, she made answer, with tears in her eyes, that she in nowise knew the cause thereof; that it grieved her full sore, making her weep unceasingly, no longer to feel her beauteous tresses on her head and that, over and beyond all that, she longed for the open air, could not restrain the desire to run about and climb trees, leap and dance and caper even as she had been wont to do when she passed her days beneath the open sky; that she spent her nights in weeping, dreaming of the forests beneath whose branches she had been used to lay her down to sleep; and when she called to mind those things, she abhorred and detested the air of the cloister which grievously impeded her breathing; ay, and that within her there did lurk many evil vapours and that sometimes she would be strangely disturbed and distracted when in chapel, by thoughts that brought a blush to her countenance. "Then," said the Abbess, "did I fortify the poor waif with the edifying teaching of the Church, reminding her of the everlasting bliss which women who lived lives unstained by sin, enjoyed in Paradise; telling her how transitory was our life here below, and how certain and sure the goodness of God who, for a few deceptive delights foregone in this world, offers us, in the next, the reward of His everlasting love. Despite these sage maternal counsels, the evil spirit continued to dwell in the said sister. She was for ever gazing at the green trees and the green fields, peering out through the church windows at Mass and other prayer-

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times; and out of pure contrariness, she would go as white as a linen sheet to the end that she might have leave to stay on in her bed; and sometimes she would run and frisk about the cloisters like a goat that has broken loose from its tether. But in the end, she did wax very thin, lost her great beauty and withered away to nothing. In this crisis, we, the Abbess, her mother-in-God, fearing lest she should die, did give orders that she should be brought into the sick ward. But, one winter's morning, the said sister took flight and vanished without leaving a single trace of the manner of her going: no door broke open, no locks tampered with, no windows unfastened, nor anything to indicate how she had made her escape; this was a terrifying thing, for it could not be but she had fled with the aid of that same demon that had been torturing and tormenting her. At length, it was concluded by the authorities of the Church Metropolitan that this limb of Satan had been entrusted with the mission of debauching the nuns from the narrow way, but that, dazzled by the holiness of their lives, she had flown back, through the air, to the company of those witches who, in mockery of our holy religion, had left her behind in the place of the Virgin Mary." Having thus spoken, the Lady Abbess was, in accordance with the command of our Lord Archbishop, conducted back in great state to the convent of Mount Carmel.

Ninthly, there came before us on a subpoena duly served upon him, Joseph, commonly hight Leschalopier, a money-changer, residing above bridge at the



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sign of *The Golden Bezant*, who, after taking oath as a good Catholic to say nought save what he knew to be true concerning the case then proceeding before the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, did bear witness as follows:

“I am an unhappy father, suffering grievous affliction of spirit by the holy will of Almighty God. Before and until the coming of the Succubus of the rue Chaulde, I did possess—and ’twas all I had in the world—a son, handsome as the scion of a noble house, learned as a clerk, having travelled in more than a dozen foreign lands, and a good Catholic to boot, keeping himself out of range of love’s darts; for he cared nought about marriage, but ever looked upon himself as the staff of my declining years, the apple of my eye and the joy unceasing of my heart. He was a son of whom a King of France might have been proud; a kind and courageous man, the shining light of my business, the joy of my home and, in a word, a jewel of inestimable price, seeing that I am alone in the world, having had the misfortune to lose my life’s companion, and being too old to make another one myself. Lo, then, my Lord, this peerless treasure hath been snatched from me and plunged into the depths of hell by this demon. Yea, Sir Judge, as soon as ever this sheath of a thousand knives was seen by my boy, this she-devil, I say, in whom everything, every part of her, doth conspire to lure to damnation, this sensual sty, this home of carnal delight, whom nothing and no one can satiate or satisfy—no sooner, I repeat, did the poor fellow clap eyes upon her than he was caught in the ineluctable lime of her love; and ever

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since he did live nowhere save betwixt the pillars of Venus, and lived there no long time, because in that place the heat is so great that nothing can quench the thirst of that gulf, not even though you poured therein the seminal essence of the whole world. Alack-a-day, my poor boy, his wallet and all his reproductive hopes, his eternal happiness, the whole of him—nay more than all of him—was engulfed and sucked into this aperture, lost and swallowed up like a grain of wheat in the throat of a bull. Having thus become an orphan in my old age, I, who speak these words, shall taste no other joy but to see this demon, repasted of blood and money, burnt alive—this Arachne who hath bewitched, sucked more hymens, devoured more green striplings, more hearts, more foreskins, than all the thieves in all the thieves' kitchens in Christendom put together. Burn and torture this ghoul, this vampire that feeds on living souls; this wild beast that laps up blood, this lamp of unhallowed love fed by the poison of all the vipers. Close up this pit whereof man can never find the bottom. I will give my money to the Chapter to buy the faggots, and with my own hands will I stir the fire. See to it, my Lord Judge, that you keep fast hold of this devil, for the fire within her is fiercer than any other earthly fire. In her loins she hath all the fires of hell; the might of Samson is in her hair, and in her voice doth sound the music of the spheres; she weaves her charms so that she may compass the death of the body and soul at the same time; she smiles in order that she may bite; she kisses so that she may devour. In short, she

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would beguile a saint and make him deny his God. Oh, my son, my son! Where, in what region now doth tarry the flower of my life cut off by this female sheath as clean as though it had been a pair of scissors? Ah, Sir Judge, wherefore did you summon me? Who will give me back my son, whose soul hath been absorbed by a belly which metes out death to all, and yet to none gives life? Only the devil destroyeth and begetteth not. This then is my evidence, and I pray Master Tournebousche to set it down, not omitting so much as an iota, and then to give me a schedule thereof, to the end that I may recite it over to God in my prayers every night so that the blood of innocence may cry aloud in His ears, and so that, by this means, I may win, through His infinite mercy, forgiveness for my son."

Then there follow seven and twenty other declarations, whereof the transcription, in their true objectivity and in all the qualities of space, would be right wearisome, drag out to a great length, and interrupt the thread of this curious narrative; for according to all ancient precepts, a story should go straight to the point, even as a bull goes straight to perform the main business of his life. So here do I set down the pith and marrow of these testimonies.

By a great number of good Christians, burgesses and their wives, inhabitants of the noble city of Tours, it was stated that this demon had kept wassail and high festival every night there was; that she had never been seen in any church; that she had cursed God and mocked His priests; that she had never, in any place, made

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the sign of the Cross, that she spoke all the languages under the sun—a gift that had been granted by God to none save the holy Apostles; that she had, times without number, been encountered in the open country, mounted upon an unknown animal, which coursed more swiftly than the clouds; that she grew no older, but that youth was ever radiant upon her face; that she had loosed the girdle for a father and for his son in one self-same day, saying that her portal sinned not; that she visibly possessed evil influences that emanated from her because a fellow, taking his ease on a seat at his door, one evening, did but set eyes on her and straight way was seized with such a gust of hot love that, entering his dwelling, he hastened into bed and did, in his fury, so tumble and tousle his housekeeper, that next morning they found him dead yet still labouring at his task; that the old men of the city would go and spend what was left of their days and their pelf at her place of business so that they might recapture the joys of their youthful sins; and that they died like flies, all of them face downwards; and that some of them grew swart all over like blackamoors; that the demon never suffered herself to be seen at dinner, or at breakfast or at supper, but ever ate alone, for that she fed on human brains; that several had seen her go by night to the graveyards and grovel for corpses of young men; for in no other wise could she appease the devil that raged within her entrails, and tore hither and thither like a hurricane, and that such was the origin of the violent gnawing, terrific piercing, precipitant and diabolical



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motions, squeezing, twistings, huggings of love and voluptuousness from which several poor wights had come forth bruised, torn, bitten, pinched, wrenched, twisted, pummelled and battered; and that since the coming of Our Lord, who had imprisoned the archfiend in the bodies of swine, no evil beast had ever been seen in any quarter of the earth so maleficent, so virulent, so furious as this one; so much so, that if you were to fling the whole city of Tours into this field of Venus, it would be transmuted into a sort of grain which the same demon would swallow up as though 'twere strawberries.

Then followed numberless other statements, narratives, and depositions, in all whereof appeared clearly the diabolical lineage of this woman—daughter, sister, grandam, wife, spawn or brother of the devil, besides the abundant proofs of her maleficence and of the manifold calamities which, because of her, had descended on every household. And if leave were given here to set down all the evidence recorded in the registers conserved by the worthy to whom the exposure of these enormities is due, 'twould seem like a sample of those hair-raising yells uttered by the Egyptians when they were visited by the seventh plague. This prosecution, therefore, did great credit to Messire Guillaume Tournebousche, by whom all the notes are quoted!

Thus, in the tenth vacation, came to an end this inquisition fully and completely furnished with proofs, sworn evidence and replete with vouchers, double vouchers, quiddits, quilllets, mandates, assignments,



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recognisances, recoveries, confessions public and private, affidavits, adjournments, confrontations, arguments, to all whereof the demon was called upon to make answer. And it came to pass that, on every hand, the citizens did remark that if she were really a devil and furnished with internal horns that had sprouted within her nature, whereby she drank in men and crushed them to death, she would be compelled to swim for a long time in this ocean of documents ere, at long last, she should arrive, safe and sound, in Hell.

## II. THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDINGS TAKEN IN RESPECT OF THIS FEMALE DEMON.

✠ *In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

**I**N THE year of Our Lord, one thousand two hundred and seventy-one, before us, Hiérosme Cornille, High Penitentiary, Ecclesiastical Judge, to that office duly and canonically appointed there did appear:

Sire Philippe d'Ydré, town-bailiff for the City of Tours and the province of Touraine, residing in his mansion in the rue de la Rotisserie, at Chasteauneuf; Master Jehan Ribou, provost of the confraternity and guild of Master-Drapers, residing on the Quay de Bretaingne, at the *Sign of Saint Peter in Chains*; Messire Antoine Jahan, Grandmaster of the Company of Money-changers, residing on the Place du Pont at the *Sign of Saint Mark counting over his Livres Tournois*; Master Martin Maupertuis, Captain of the City Archers, residing at the château; Jehan Rabelais, ship's carpenter and boatbuilder, living at the port of the Isle Saint Jacques, treasurer of the confraternity of the Mariners of the Loire; Marc Hiérosme, commonly called Maschefer, hosier, at the *Sign of Saint Sebastienne*, President of the Preudhommes, and Jacques commonly

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called de Villedomer, Master tavern-keeper, wine-grower, residing in the High Street, at the *Sign of The Pine Apple*. To the said Sire d'Ydré, bailiff, and to the said citizens of Tours, the Petition here following, as written by them, was read over by us, and by them signed, in order that it might be submitted to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

### PETITION

WE the undersigned, all of us citizens of Tours, have met together at the house of our lord the Sire d'Ydré, bailiff of Touraine, in the absence of our Mayor, and have petitioned for the hearing of our complaints and grievances concerning the following matters whereof we answer for the truth, before the tribunal of the Archbishop, judge of ecclesiastical crimes, who alone has power to deal with the case which we have set out.

A considerable time ago there came to this city, in the guise and semblance of a woman, an evil spirit who dwells in the suburb of Saint Estienne, in a house belonging to the innkeeper Tortebras, situated on land owned by the Chapter and under the temporal jurisdiction of the Archiepiscopal authority. The said stranger carries on the profession or calling of courtesan or prostitute in a manner both harmful and excessive, and with such ever-increasing offences against decency and good behaviour, that she is in a fair way to undermining and bringing to nought the Catholic Faith in this City; because all those who betake themselves to







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her come back with their souls utterly ruined, and refuse the ministrations of the Church with all manner of reprehensible and scandalous utterances.

And whereas a considerable number of those who have held commerce with her are dead, and considering that she came to our city with no other assets than that with which Nature did provide her, she now possesses—if the public outcry is to be believed—infinite riches, regal wealth, acquired, as it is powerfully and potently believed, by witchcraft or, at least, by thefts committed with the aid of the magical attractions of her supernaturally amorous person;

And whereas it is the honour and safety of our families that are at stake, and that never, in this neighbourhood, was seen woman enamoured of her body or wanton light o' love carrying on with such lamentable consequences her strumpet's calling, or threatening so openly and fiercely the lives, the savings, the morals, the chastity and the religion of all the denizens of this city;

Considering too that it is needful that an enquiry should be held into her person, her property and her general demeanour, to the end that it may be seen whether or not suchlike effects of love are lawfully brought about, and proceed not, as her actions and behaviour would seem to imply, from some maleficent work of Satan, who doth oftentimes come and visit Christian lands under the guise and semblance of a woman, as doth appear from the Holy Scriptures, where it is said that Our Blessed Saviour was taken up on to a high

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mountain whence Lucifer or Astaroth showed unto Him the fertile land of Judea, and also that in several places there have been seen Succubi or Demons with faces like women who, being in no wise willing to go back to hell, and having within them an insatiable fire, essay desperately to cool and ease themselves by drawing into them the souls of men;

And whereas in the case of the aforesaid woman there do exist countless proofs of traffic with Satan, whereof certain inhabitants do talk undisguisedly, and that it were well for the peace and quiet of the woman that the affair should be sifted in order that there may be no more talk going about by certain folks who have been brought to ruin by her misdoings;

Now therefore, we do beseech that it may please you to lay before our spiritual lord, the father of this diocese, the Most Noble and Holy Archbishop, Jehan de Mon-soreau, the grievances which afflict his unhappy flock, so that he may take counsel thereupon.

By so doing, you will fulfil the obligations of your office, even as we shall acquit ourselves of our duties as guardians of the City's safety, in respect of the things specially entrusted to our keeping, each in his own proper district.

And we have set our hands to these presents, after Mass on the Feast of All Saints in the Year of Our Lord One thousand two hundred and seventy-one.

Master Tournebousche, having duly completed the recital of this petition, we, Hiérosme Cornille, did address the petitioners saying unto them:





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Gentlemen, do you now still persist in your statements? Have you any proofs other than those of which we have already taken cognisance, and do you undertake to maintain the truth thereof before God, before man and before the prisoner?

All, save Master Jehan Rabelais, did adhere to their belief; and the aforesaid Rabelais did withdraw from the case, saying that he held the Moorish girl for a perfectly natural woman and a right honest strumpet who had no other fault than that she did keep and foster within her a mighty powerful degree of amorous calorification.

And we, the Judge duly appointed, after mature deliberation did find and declare that there were good and sufficient grounds for examining and enquiring into the petition of the said citizens, and we give orders that the woman, now incarcerated in the gaol of the Cathedral Chapter, shall be put on her trial in accordance with all the provisions of the law as inscribed in the canons and regulations laid down *contra daemonios*.

The said regulations duly embodied in the summons will be shouted by the town-crier at all the cross-roads, after notice given by trumpet, in order that all people may know of it, and that each may give evidence as his conscience may direct, may be confronted with the said demon, and finally the prisoner shall be provided with an advocate, according to custom, and the interrogations and the trial generally shall be conducted in accordance with the law.

(Signed) HIÉROSME CORNILLE.



## DROLL TALES: THE SECOND DECADE

And underneath:

### TOURNEBOUSCHE

\* *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

In this year of grace one thousand two hundred and seventy-one on the tenth day of February, after Mass, by order of us Hiérosme Cornille, Ecclesiastical Judge, there was taken out from the gaol of the Cathedral Chapter and brought into our presence the woman who was arrested in the house of Tortebras, the inn-keeper, situated on land belonging to the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Saint Maurice and therefore subject to the temporal seignorial jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Tours, not to mention that, by reason of the nature of the crimes to her imputed, she is answerable before the tribunal of ecclesiastical justice, whereof she hath been duly informed, so that she should labour under no error in this regard.

Then, after due and serious recital of the whole, in such wise read that it should be well understood of her, first of the Petition of the townsmen; next of the statements, complaints, accusations and procedures which are to be found writ down in twenty-two registers by Master Tournebousche and are hereinbefore set forth, we, duly imploring the assistance of God and His Church, did set ourselves to seek out the truth, first by questions put to the prisoner.

And, first of all, we did call upon her to state in what country or city she had been born. And she, in answer, did speak as follows:

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"In Mauretania."

Next, we enquired whether she had father and mother or any kinsfolk. Whereto she made answer that these she had never known.

We then asked her to declare what name was really hers, and she said:

"Zulma, in the Arab tongue."

And again we demanded of her how she came to speak our language; and she did answer:

"Because I came into this your country."

And we asked:

"When came you hither?"

And she replied:

"About twelve years ago."

And again we asked how old she then was; and she did answer:

"Fifteen years, as near as may be."

And we did say:

"Thus you own to being now seven and twenty years old?"

And she answered:

"I do."

And we then stated that she was therefore the Moorish girl who had been found in the niche of Our Lady the Virgin, thereafter baptised by the Archbishop and brought to the font by the late Lord of Roche-Corbon and the damozel of Azay, his spouse, and afterwards placed by them as a nun in the convent of Mount Carmel, where she was said to have taken the vows of chastity, poverty, silence, and devotion to God, with

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the divine assistance of Saint Claire. And the accused made answer saying:

"That is true!"

Then we enquired whether she acknowledged as true the declarations of the very noble and illustrious Abbess of Mount Carmel, and likewise the statement of Jacqueline, commonly called Vieul-Oing, a kitchen-maid; and she said that, in the main, their words were true.

We then said:

"It follows, therefore, that you are a Christian?"

And she did answer:

"Yes, Father."

At this juncture she was called upon by us to make the sign of the Cross and to dip her finger into a stoup of Holy Water which Guillaume Tournebousche had put ready to her hand. This she did, before our eyes, and the fact was admitted as incontestable that Zulma, the Mauretanian, known in our country by the name of Blanche Bruyn, a nun in the convent of Mount Carmel, called in religion Sister Claire, and suspected of concealing under the semblance of a woman the personality and attributes of a demon, did, in our presence, perform an act of religion, the which was duly noted and recorded by the Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

Thereupon did we address unto her the following words:

"My daughter, you are most powerfully suspected of having had recourse to the assistance of the Evil One, in the light of the manner in which you escaped from the convent which, in all respects, was a phenomenon of the supernatural order."

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But she made answer that what she then did was the most natural thing in the world, as she merely went forth into the fields, by way of the gate opening on to the street, after Vespers, clad in the robe of Dom Jehan de Marsilis, a visiting priest, who had quartered her in a hut belonging to him, situated in Cupid's alley, near to one of the towers of the city. And there, according to the deponent's story, the said priest did, at great length and right thoroughly, acquaint her with the sweet dallings of love, whereof she declared herself to have been wholly ignorant until that time. And to these sweet dallings she took a great liking, finding them of good and pleasant usage.

Then the lord of Amboise, having observed her, the defendant, at the window of this retreat, was immediately seized with a ferocious desire for her; and she, loving him with a warmer and more unforced accord than ever she had loved the monk, fled from the hovel, where Dom Marsilis was holding her prisoner to minister to his own pleasure. And she betook herself, wandering forth on the long road, to Amboise, to the castle of the aforesaid lord, where she enjoyed countless diversions, such as hunting and dancing, and went apparelled in robes fit for a queen. One day, the Sire de la Roche-Pozay, having been invited by the Sire d'Amboise to come and drink and make merry with him, the Baron of Amboise did, all unknown to her, shew her to his visitor as she was coming forth naked from her bath. And at the sight of her, the said Lord of la Roche-Pozay, falling mighty sick with love for her,

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did on the very next day overcome the Lord of Amboise in single combat, and with great violence, and heeding not her tears, dragged her off to the Holy Land where she, the deponent, lived the life of women who are much beloved and held in high estimation by reason of their beauty. Then, after divers adventures, she, the deponent, had returned to this country, despite her presentiments of evil; for such was the will and pleasure of her Lord and Master the Baron de Bueil, who was dying of homesickness in those Asiatic lands, and was fain to behold once more his ancestral home. Therefore did he promise her, the deponent, that he would preserve her from every danger. And she had put full trust and faith in him, forasmuch as she did love him very dearly. And it came to pass that on his arrival in this country, the Sieur de Bueil fell sick and died a lamentable death despite the fervent requests which she, the deponent, did vainly address to him, for he hated doctors, thau-maturges and apothecaries; and that this was the whole truth.

Then we did point out to the defendant that, this being so, she did acknowledge for truth the evidence of the good Sire Harduin and of the inn-keeper Tortebras. Whereupon the deponent made answer that she recognised as true the greater part thereof, but that some passages thereof were evil, calumnious and imbecile.

Next, the accused was called upon by us to state whether she had tasted of love and carnal intercourse with all the men, nobles, burgesses and others whereof mention had been made in the complaints and declarations



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of the citizens. Whereto she did reply with notable effrontery:

“Love, yea; but carnal intercourse, I cannot tell.”

And we pointed out to her that all of them had succumbed as the result of her deeds. And she made answer that their death could in nowise be laid at her door, because she always refused them access to her and that always, the more she shunned them, the more they came and besieged her with ungovernable fury; howbeit, whenever she, the deponent, was taken by them, she did, with God’s help, put herself to it with all her strength, because in this thing she tasted delights infinitely greater than any others. Then the deponent stated that she made confession of her secret feelings solely because she had been enjoined by us to speak the truth concerning the whole matter, and that she did mightily fear the agonies inflicted by the torturers.

She was next called upon by us to state, on pain of torture, in what state of mind she found herself when a man of noble birth should die in consequence of his commerce with her. And she made answer saying that she fell into a deep melancholy and was fain to put an end to her life, and prayed God, the Virgin and the Saints to receive her into Paradise, for that never had she, the deponent, ever fallen in with any save brave and kindly men in whom there was no guile; and that when she beheld them dead, she fell into a mortal sadness, holding herself to be an evil creature, or one under a spell of evil which she communicated as though it had been the plague.

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Then we asked her to state where she made her orisons.

And she made answer that she said her prayers in her oratory in the presence of God, Who, according to the Gospel, sees and hears all, and dwelleth everywhere.

Then we asked her to say how it was that she never went to church, was never seen there at any of the services or at any festival. And answer made she that those who came to have the love of her always chose holy days for their merry sport, and that she, for her part, always deferred to their wishes.

Whereupon we, as a good Christian, did admonish her and point out that if this were the case, she showed herself a truer servant to man than to God.

Whereupon the deponent made answer and said that for such as loved her well and truly, she would cast herself upon the burning faggots, having, in all that had to do with love, followed nought but her own nature; and that for the world's weight in gold she would never have given her love nor her body not even to a King did she not love him with her heart, her feet, her head, her hair, her brow, ay, with everything. In short, she gave us full thoroughly to understand that she had never played the punk by selling a single particle of her love to any man she had not chosen for her own, and that whosoever had held her in his arms for an hour, or had given her ever so small a kiss upon the mouth, did possess her for the remainder of his days.

Next, she was called upon to say whence came the jewels, golden dishes, money, precious stones, royal

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furniture, carpets, *et cetera*, which, according to expert valuation, were held to be worth two hundred thousand doubloons, and had been found in her house and had been handed over to the custody of the Cathedral treasurer. She then made answer and said that she put all her hopes in us and equally in God himself; but that to this question she could not reply seeing that it concerned the sweetest and most delicious particularities of love, whereon she had always nourished her being.

Then, questioned by us anew, she said that if we, her judge, did but know in what fervour she held the man she loved, with what submission she followed him, did the path lead to good or to evil; how she studied to obey him, with what joy she gave heed to his desires and drank in the sacred words wherewith his lips did vouchsafe to gratify her, and with what profound adoration she looked upon his person, we ourselves, her aged judge, would deem as did her heart's beloved, that no sum could pay for affection so great and so universally sought after. Moreover, she added that never, of any man beloved by her, had she solicited either present or reward, and that she was perfectly content to dwell in their hearts; that she revelled therein amid joys inexhaustible and ineffable, finding herself richer in affection than in aught beside and occupied with one thought only, which was to pay them back in greater joy and bliss than she herself had of them. Howbeit, despite her reiterated insinuations, her lovers always constrained themselves graciously to bestow upon her tokens of their gratitude. One, perchance, would come to her with a string of

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pearls and say: "Behold, this is to show my beloved that the satin of her skin did in truth appear to me whiter than pearls." And so saying, he would hang it round her neck, kissing it very fervently. She was vexed at these follies; nathless, she could not refuse to keep a piece of jewelry which it gave them pleasure to behold in the place where they put it upon her. Each one had his own peculiar caprice. Sometimes, one of them would take it into his head to tear asunder the costly apparel wherewith she covered herself to look pleasing in his eyes; yet another would delight to adorn her by placing sapphires on her arms, her legs, her neck or in her hair; yet another to lay her at full length on rugs, on long shrouds of sable silk or velvet and lingered whole days in ecstatic contemplation of the perfections of her, the deponent, to whom the things desired by her lovers did give infinite pleasure, since those things made them, everyone of them, happy.

Then she made answer saying that sith we love nothing so much as our pleasure and are fain that everything should be radiant in loveliness and harmony, without, as well as within, the heart, so all were fain to see the raiment worn by her, the deponent, adorned with the fairest things; and to this end all her lovers took equal pleasure with herself in lavishing, thereon, gold and silk and flowers. And forasmuch as these fair things in no wise marred aught, she had no power or authority to hinder a knight, or even a wealthy citizen, of whom she was beloved, to do as he willed; and thus she found herself compelled to receive from them precious perfumes









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and other gifts which troubled her full sore; and this she said was the source of all that gold plate, all those rich carpets and jewels which had been seized at her house by the inquisitors of the law.

Here ended the first examination of the said Sister Claire, suspected of being a witch, for we, her judge and Guillaume Tournebousche, were over weary of hearing her voice in our ears, and found our understanding bemused at every point.

And by us, her judge, the second examination was fixed for the third day following, so that proofs might be sought for of the obsession and presence of the evil spirit in the body of the accused who, in pursuance of the judge's order, was again conveyed to her gaol under the conduct of Master Guillaume Tournebousche.

\* *In nomine Patris et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*

On the third day ensuing of the said month of February, before us, Hiérosme Cornille, *et cetera*, was brought the above named Sister Claire, in order to be interrogated concerning the deeds and gestures to her imputed, and for judgment to be passed thereupon.

And we, her judge, did address the prisoner and say to her that, in view of the divers answers given by her to the questions previously put, it was clear that such things could not be performed by an ordinary woman, and that if such faculties were granted to her, as to live the life of a woman mad with carnal desire giving pleasure to all and sundry, compassing so many deaths and

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weaving her spells so perfectly, it could not be but that she must have a demon lodged within her, to whom she must have sold her soul by a special pact. It had been clearly shown that, beneath her outward semblance, there did live and have its being a demon that wrought all these ills, and she was called upon forthwith to declare at what age she had given access to this demon, and to confess and make clear the conditions and terms of the pact concluded between them, and then to tell the truth concerning the malefactions they had committed in common.

And the deponent made answer and declared that it was her will to speak before us, her human judge, even as she would speak in the presence of God, Who shall judge us all. Then she protested that she had never seen the demon, never spoken to it, and had never entertained the least desire to see it; that she had never been a professed strumpet, for she had never practised the delicious tricks and caresses that love invents, save when moved by the pleasure which Our Lord and Creator had implanted therein, and that she had always rather been incited to be sweet and kind to the man she loved than impelled by any pitiless desire within her. But even if such had been the case, she besought us to bear in mind that she was a poor little African girl into whose veins God had poured some very hot blood and, as she thought, such a ready understanding of amorous delights, that whenever a man looked upon her, she felt a great restlessness in her heart. And, if prompted by desire to know her, an amorous lord should touch her

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in any part of her body by slipping his hand thereon willy-nilly, she was straightway in his power, for her heart yielded at once. Merely by such a touch, the apprehension and remembrance of all the delicious joys of love were awakened within the centre of her being and stirred within her a most resolute ardour which spreading upwards inflamed her veins and made her from head to foot a living vessel fulfilled of love and joy. And ever since that day when first Dom Marsilis had instilled in her understanding the knowledge of such things, she had never had any other thought, and recognized then and there that love was a thing in such perfect accord with her special nature, that it had been clearly proved to her that for lack of a man and a little natural moistening, she would have withered up and died in that convent there. In witness whereof she, the deponent, affirms in all certainty that after her flight from the said convent, she was never for a single day, nay not so much as the briefest space of time in a state of melancholy or sadness. But she was always merry and did then fulfil the sacred will of God in this respect, the which she deemed did enjoin her to divert herself to the full in order to make up for all the time previously lost by her in the convent.

In answer whereto, it was argued by us, Hiérosme Cornille, that in so saying she had openly blasphemed the name of God, because we had all been made by Him for His greater glory and sent into this world to honour and serve Him; ever to heed His holy commandments and so to order our lives that at last we should come to

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His eternal joy, and not to be for ever lying down doing an act which the very beasts themselves do perform but once in a season. Then the said Sister made answer saying that she had always greatly honoured God; that, wheresoever, and in what land soever, she had dwelt, she had always taken pity on the poor and suffering, giving to them freely of money and raiment, and weeping whenever she beheld or learned of their wretchedness. And she added that when the Day of Judgment should come, she, the deponent, looked to have around her a goodly array of works, pleasing in the sight of God, that should cry for mercy on her. And she said that, had it not been for her humility of spirit, her fear of incurring reproach and of giving offence to the members of the Chapter she would with joy have handed over her all to complete the Cathedral of Saint Maurice and have given funds for pious foundations, sparing neither her happiness nor her person; and that, with such thoughts as these in her mind, she had taken a double pleasure in her nights of love, because each of her amours would have planted another stone in the building of the said basilica. And it was for this end, and for the eternal salvation of her soul that all who loved her had given so freely and lavishly of their riches.

Thereupon, we made answer to her and said that she could not plead barrenness on the ground that, despite these repeated copulations, no child had been born of her; for this merely proved that she had a devil in her body. Moreover, none but Astaroth, or one of the Apostles, could speak in every tongue, whereas she could



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speak the language of every country, which clearly proved the presence of a devil within her. And she, in her turn, made answer saying that, so far as the diversity of tongues was concerned, she of the Greek knew nought save the *Kyrie eleison*, whereof she made abundant use; and of the Latin, nought but *Amen*; and this she said to God, hoping to gain her freedom thereby. For the rest, she said, it gave her much sorrow to be without children; and that if the goodwives produced them, it was doubtless because they found but slight pleasure in the thing, whereas she herself found rather too much. But this was doubtless in accordance with God's will, Who reflected that if there were too much pleasure, the world might perish altogether.

Hearing this, and a host of other reasons which sufficiently established the presence of a demon in the nun's body, because it is Lucifer's way ever to discover arguments which, though heretical, have an outward semblance of plausibility, we did give orders that the accused should, in our presence, be put to the torture and grievously hurt to the end that by such suffering the said demon might be humbled and be brought to submit to the authority of the Church. Therefore, we did call upon François de Hangest, chief chirurgion and physician to the Chapter, to give us the benefit of his coöperation, charging him, in terms of the schedule hereinafter set forth, to examine and report upon the qualities of the feminine particularities of the said woman, in order to illumine our religion concerning the methods whereof the demon availed itself to lure the

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souls of men in this direction, and to find out whether any, and if so, what artifice was used.

Then the Moorish girl did weep full sore, and groan ere she was hurt, and despite the shackles, she fell on her knees, imploring with cries and wailings that this order should be revoked, saying that her limbs were so weak and her bones so delicate and tender, that she would break in pieces like glass. And finally, she made offer to ransom herself from such torments by giving all she had to the Chapter and quitting the country forthwith.

Whereupon we did call upon her voluntarily to declare that she was, and always had been, a demon of the nature of the succubi, the which are female devils, whose mission it is to corrupt Christian men by the sweet tricks and criminal delights of love. But she made answer and did right vehemently protest that such a statement would be an abominable lie, for that she did always feel and most potently believe that she was most certainly a natural woman.

Then, her irons having been removed by the Inquisitor, the defendant did divest herself of her shift, and most naughtily and of malice aforethought, did trouble, bemuse and confound the understanding, by the sight of her body, the which doth put upon man a pressure and a need against which he strives in vain.

Master Guillaume Tournebousche was, willy-nilly, obliged to lay aside his pen at this point and to withdraw from the court, stating that, without incredible temptations which lay siege to his brain, he could not

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be a witness of this torture, for he felt the devil was taking violent possession of his person.

Here ended the second interrogation, and forasmuch as the apparitor and janitor of the Chapter declared that Master François de Hangest was absent in the country, it was decided to adjourn the torture and the further interrogations until the day next following, at the hour of noon, after Mass.

All this was duly recorded by me, Hiérosme, in the absence of Master Guillaume Tournebousche in witness whereof we have hereto set our hand

HIÉROSME CORNILLE  
Grand Penitentiary.

## PETITION

This fourteenth day of the month of February, in the presence of me, Hiérosme Cornille, did appear the aforesaid Masters Jehan Ribou, Antoyne Jahan, Martin Baupertuys, Hiérosme Maschefer, Jacques de Ville d'Omer, and the Sire d'Ydré, in lieu and stead of the Mayor of the City of Tours, then absent. All these were the complainants named in the writ issued in the Town Hall, and unto them have we, at the request of Blanche Bruyn, describing herself as a nun of the Convent of Mount Carmel, under the name of Sister Claire, made known the appeal of the accused to submit herself to trial by fire and water in the presence of the Chapter and Civic Authorities of Tours, in order to show that she was indeed a woman, and to establish her innocence.

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To this petition the aforesaid accusers, for their part, did consent; and they, seeing that the city guaranteed, undertook to make ready a place and to prepare the stake in such manner as the sponsors of the defendant might deem suitable.

And we, in our capacity as judge, did fix, for the day of the trial, the first day of the New Year, which will be Easter next, and the hour thereof as noon, after Mass, all parties having agreed that such notice was amply sufficient.

And notice of this decision shall be given far and wide in all the cities, market-towns and châteaux of Touraine and of all the land of France at the discretion and likewise at the cost of the promulgators.

### III. HOW THE SUCCUBUS CONTRIVED TO SUCK FORTH THE SOUL OF THE AGED JUDGE AND WHAT CAME OF THEIR DEVILISH DELECTATIONS.

**T**HIS is the last act of confession, made this first day of March in the year of Our Lord one thousand two hundred and seventy-one, by Hiérosme Cornille, priest, Canon of the Chapter of the Cathedral of Saint Maurice, Grand Penitentiary, who doth here avow his total unworthiness. He, his last hour having come, being truly penitent for all his sins, misdeeds, misdemeanours, malefactions and evil conduct, hath desired that his confession should be made public so that the truth might be brought clearly to light, for the glory of God and the justification of the Court; and also that it might procure him some alleviation of his punishment in the world to come.

The said Hiérosme Cornille, being upon his deathbed, there were summoned to hear his declarations, Jehan de la Haye (de Haga), Vicar of the Church of Saint Maurice; Pierre Guyard, Treasurer of the Chapter, appointed by his Grace Jehan de Monsoreau, Archbishop, to take down his words; and Dom Louis Pot, monk of Majus Monasterium (Marmoustier), chosen



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by him to be his ghostly father and confessor; all three assisted by the great and illustrious Doctor Guillaume de Censoris, Roman Archdeacon, now in our diocese as the Envoy (legatus) of our Holy Father the Pope. And lastly, in the presence of a great concourse of Christian folk gathered together to witness the passing of the said Hiérosme Cornille, in conformity with his known wish to make a public act of repentance, seeing that it was the season of Lent, and that his utterances might open the eyes of any Christians who should be faring on the high-road of perdition.

And before him, Hiérosme, who on account of his great weakness was unable to speak, Dom Louis Pot read out the following confession at the hearing of which all present were deeply affected.

My brethren, until the seventy-ninth year of my age, to which I am now come, save for the minor faults which every Christian, how holy soever he be, cannot help committing before God, but from the consequences of which he can obtain remission by penance, I believe that I lived the life of a true Christian and merited the good opinion and esteem in which I was held there in this diocese in which I was raised to the important office of Grand Penitentiary, albeit I was unworthy thereof. And now, overcome at the thought of the infinite glory of God, terror-stricken at the sufferings which await evil-doers and prevaricators in hell, I am fain to lessen the enormity of my derelictions by the greatest act of penance I can perform in this my last hour. Therefore I

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have entreated the Church, whose commandments and laws I have transgressed and most villainously betrayed, to grant me the boon of publicly accusing me, even as was done among the Early Christians. I should wish in order to give the more convincing testimony of my repentance, that I had still enough life in me to station myself in the Cathedral porch there to be reviled and spat upon by all my brethren, and there to abide a whole day on my knees, with a taper in my hand, a halter round my neck, and no shoes upon my feet, seeing that even like a lost sheep I did err and stray in the paths of Satan to the great detriment of God's good works. But in this mighty shipwreck of my frail virtue—and may it be an incentive to you to shun vice, to flee from the pitfalls of the demon and to take refuge in the bosom of the Church, wherein is help for all—I was so bewitched and cozened by Lucifer, that Our Lord Jesus Christ will, through the intercession of all of ye, whose aid and prayers I do implore, have mercy on me a poor deluded Christian, whose eyes are dissolving in water. And would that I could be granted another life so that I might spend it in deeds of penance. Hear ye then, my brethren, and tremble at the things I shall unfold. Elected by the Chapter in general synod assembled, to direct and sustain the proceedings begun against the demon which did take on the semblance of a woman disguised as a nun who had renounced her vows; an abominable creature that denied her God, hight Zulma in the land of the unbelievers, whence she came, and in this diocese known by the name of Claire from the Con-

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vent of Mount Carmel, the which hath sore afflicted the city by putting herself beneath a great number of men in order to win over their souls to Mammon, Astaroth and Satan, princes of darkness, by causing them to quit this world in a state of mortal sin, and causing them to die in that very place whence life doth spring, I, yea I, her judge, did in the evening of my days, fall into the snare and did most grievously err and lose my way by betraying the trust which the Chapter—because the coldness of old age had chilled my nature—did repose in me. Hark ye, while I recount the cunning ways of this demon, and stand ye firm against her artifices. On hearing the first answer given by the aforesaid succubus, I observed with fear and wonder that the irons that had been clamped upon her feet and hands left no trace behind them, and so was I dazzled by the contrast between her hidden power and her seeming weakness. And then my mind was troubled, on a sudden, at the sight of all those physical perfections wherewith the little she-devil had adorned herself; I listened to the music of her voice which warmed me from head to foot and made me long to be young again that I might yield myself to her; for I deemed that, for a single hour passed in her company, and for the delights of love whereof I should taste within her lovely arms, my soul's eternal salvation were all too small a price to pay.

And then I laid aside the firmness with which judges should ever be invested. The demon, when I put my questions to her, did so belard me with seeming reason-







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able discourse that, at the time of her second examination, I was firmly convinced that I should commit a crime in hurting and tormenting a poor little creature that wept like an innocent lamb. Then recalled to a sense of duty by a voice from on high which told me that these golden words, this seemingly celestial music were but diabolical mummeries, and that this lovely lissome body would change into a horribly hairy beast, with dreadful sharp claws, and her eyes, now so soft, into embers of hell fire; her buttocks, into a scaly tail; and her pretty pink mouth, with its gracious lips, into the jaws and throat of a crocodile, I again determined to torture the said succubus until she should confess her nefarious mission, in accordance with what hath already been established as Christian practice. Then, when this demon did come naked before me in order to be put to the torture, I suddenly fell a victim to her power, overcome by magic spells. I felt as if my bones were splitting; a warm light was diffused within my brain; my heart bubbled and seethed with hot young blood, and I was right glad within me; and by reason of the philtre that had been flung in my eyes, all the snow upon my brow did melt. I became oblivious of my life as a Christian man; I believed myself a schoolboy, playing truant, scouring the countryside and robbing the apple trees. I had not the power to make a single sign of the Cross; I recked not of Holy Church, nor of God the Father, nor of the sweet Saviour of men. Unable to banish her vision from my mind, I wandered through the city, conjuring up the delicious tones of her voice,

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the abominably pretty body of the little demon, and saying all kinds of wicked things to myself. Then full of lecherous fury and dragged along by a tooth of the devil's fork, which had cloven a way into my brain like a hatchet into an oak tree, I was lugged away by this intolerable instrument in the direction of the prison, despite my guardian angel, the which, from time to time, tugged at my sleeve and tried to dissuade me from yielding to these temptations. But, notwithstanding his saintly advice and well meant assistance, I was pricked and pierced by millions of talons digging into my heart, and ere long I was in the gaol. Now, as soon as the doors thereof were opened to me, I beheld no more any sign or appearance of a prison, because the succubus had, with the aid of evil *genii* or fays, reared a pavilion of purple stuffs and silks, full of perfumes and flowers, where she held high revel, arrayed in sumptuous vesture; no ring of iron about her neck, nor chains about her feet. I suffered her to strip me of my ecclesiastical garments, and was put into a scented bath. Then the demon enwrapt me in a Saracen robe, regaled me with a feast of dishes rare, served in precious vessels, goblets of gold. There were wines from the East, and singing and wondrous music, and words of praise and joy stole in at my ears and made summer in my heart. And beside me lingered ever the said succubus, and her sweet yet loathsome presence awakened fresh ardours in my members. My guardian angel went away. Then I lived in the terrible light of the Moorish woman's eyes, longed only for the warm embrace of her

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delicious body, and never to lose contact with those red lips of hers, the which I did believe were natural and human; nor did I fear at all the bite of her teeth which drag men down to the bottom-most pit of hell. I delighted to feel the incomparable softness of her hands, never remembering that they were talons of uncleanness. In short, I gambolled and frisked it like a bridegroom straining to get to his bride, recking not that the bride was death everlasting. I had no thought for the things of this world, or of the things that were dear to God, dreaming only of love, of the goodly breasts and nipples of the woman before me that set me all on fire and of that Hell's gate of hers wherein I madly longed to fling myself. Alas, my brothers, for three days and three nights was I thus compelled to labour, albeit I could not quench the source that streamed from my loins into which, as though a pair of spearheads, the succubus thrust her hands, hands that imparted to my sorry old age and dried-up bones an indescribable dewy moisture.

And, first of all, this demon, in order to draw me to her, poured into me something akin to the sweetness of milk; then followed poignant delights which pierced, like a hundred needles, my bones, my marrow, my brain and nerves. Then, as this sport proceeded, the remotest places in my head caught fire together with my blood, my nerves, my flesh, my bones. I burned with the real fires of Hell which caused me violent spasms in my joints and such an incredible, intolerable, sickening orgasm of pleasure that it loosened the bonds which

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bound me to life. The tresses of the demon, which enveloped my unhappy body, played upon me with showers of flames, and I was conscious of each tress as though it had been a red hot bar. In this mortal paroxysm of delight, I beheld the glowing countenance of the succubus. She was laughing, and she uttered countless things to urge me on. She said I was her knight, her lord, her lance, her day, her joy, her thunderbolt, her life, her doughty, nay, her mightiest cavalier, and said how she longed to clip and cling to me more closely than ever, famishing to be in my skin or to have me in her own. Hearing her speak thus, and pricked on by that tongue, which sucked the very soul out of me, I plunged and flung myself farther than ever into the pit of damnation, albeit I never came to the bottom of it. And then, when I had not a drop of blood left in my veins, when the soul of me stirred no longer in my body, when I was thoroughly and completely overcome, the demon, still fresh, ruddy and white, glowing and gay as ever, spoke unto me and said:

“Poor fool, to take me for a demon! ’Sdeath, if I were to bid you sell your soul for a kiss, would you not part with it with an eager heart?”

“Ay, marry would I!”

“And if, in order thus to carry on the good work, thou wert compelled to drink the blood of new-born babes, wouldst thou not readily suck thereof so thou mightest ever have fresh vigour to spend in my bed?”

“’Tis e’en so!”

“And if, in order to be a cavalier never weary of rid-



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ing his steed, light-hearted as a man in his prime, savouring the good things of life, quaffing pleasure in long draughts, diving into the very depths of bliss like a swimmer in the Loire, would you not deny God and blaspheme the name of Jesus?"

"I would!"

"And if twenty years of monastic life were still to be thine, wouldst thou not barter them for two years of this love which burns you, two years of such power and vigour?"

"I would!"

Next I felt a hundred sharp claws which tore at my diaphragm as if innumerable birds of prey were pecking and flying shrieking away with their prize. Then on a sudden, I was lifted high above the earth upon the said succubus, who spreads her wings and spake thus:

"Ride ye, ride ye, my gallant horseman! Hold ye fast to the crupper of your mare, clutch her mane, her neck, and ride and ride and ride. All the world doth ride."

And then I saw, like a mist, all the cities of the earth, and therein—for I was furnished with a special gift of vision—I beheld every man coupled with a female demon and jousting, spawning with infinite lechary, shouting words of love and every sort of cry, and all joined, all clipped, all frisking it right merrily. Then my steed with the Moorish head showed me, while I still galloped and flew athwart the clouds, the Earth embraced by the Sun, and from their union came forth a swarm of stars; and behold each female world did disport herself with a male. And, instead of words which



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ordinary creatures use to convey their thoughts, these words gave vent to tempests, hurled lightnings and rattled thunders. Then, rising still, I beheld high above the worlds, the universal female essence doing love's work with the prince of movement. And then, to make a sport of me, the succubus brought me into the very heart of this terrific and unceasing efflux, and I was lost therein like a grain of sand in the sea. And still my white steed cried to me saying: "Ride ye, ride ye, my gallant rider, all that is doth ride." Then realising how insignificant a thing is a priest in this spawn of worlds, where all things embrace—metals, rocks, waters, winds, thunders, fishes, plants, animals, men, spirits, worlds, planets—I repudiated the Catholic Faith. Then the succubus, pointing out to me that great smear of stars which is visible in the heavens, said that it was a drop of the seminal fluid that had fallen from the great flux of the worlds in conjunction. Thereupon I fell again to riding the succubus who was raging with desire, by the light of countless millions of stars, and I was fain, as I rode, to feel the nature of those countless millions of creatures. And after this mighty effort in love's battle, I fell back utterly fordone; and as I fell, a great noise of devilish laughter sounded in my ears.

The next thing I knew was that I was lying on my bed surrounded by my servitors, who had been so brave as to give battle to the demon and had flung into the bed, where I lay, a whole bucketful of Holy Water, fervently praying to God the while. And, despite their assistance, I was compelled to carry on a horrible com-

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bat with the succubus, whose talons tore at my heart causing me to endure infinite agonies. And even when, recalled to life by the voices of my servants, kinsfolk and friends, I essayed to make the sign of the cross, the succubus, leaping on my bed, now at the head of it, now at the foot, everywhere, tried to relax my nerves, laughed, grimaced, conjured up countless obscene visions to my eyes, and filled me with unnumbered evil desires. But despite all this, his Grace the Archbishop, taking pity upon me, ordered the relics of Saint Gatien to be brought thither; and as soon as the reliquary touched my pillow, the succubus was obliged to flee leaving behind her a smell of brim-stone and hell-fire, whereat my servants, friends, and the rest, did marvel aloud for the space of a whole day. The celestial rays of God's wisdom having illumined my soul, I knew that by reason of my sins and of my combat with the evil spirit, I was in great peril of dying. Wherefore I did implore the special favour of living yet a little while in order to sing the praises of God and His Church, urging, on my behalf, the infinite merits of Christ on the Cross, Who died to save Christians. By means of this prayer, I regained sufficient strength to accuse me of my sins, to beg all the members of the Church of Saint Maurice to lend me their help and succour to bring me forth from Purgatory, whither I am now departing to redeem my sins by suffering untold misery. And finally, I declare that my decision, whereby the said demon was to be submitted to the judgment of God and to trial by fire and water, was a subterfuge originating in the evil

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intents suggested by the said demon, who by this means would have been able to escape from the judgment of the Court of the Archbishop and Chapter, seeing that she secretly confessed to having the power to bring forward, in her stead, a demon accustomed to undergo such tests. And lastly, I give and bequeath unto the Chapter of the Church of Saint Maurice all my property whatsoever to found a chantry in the said church, to build and adorn it, and to dedicate it to Saint Hiérosme and Saint Gatien, whereof the one is my patron and the other the saviour of my soul.

The foregoing, having been read out in the hearing of all those present, was thereafter submitted to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal by Jehan de la Haye (Johannes de Haga).

We, Jehan de la Haye (Johannes de Haga), elected Grand Penitentiary of Saint Maurice by the General Assembly of the Chapter, after the custom and usage of that Church, and instructed to proceed anew with the trial of the said succubus, at present confined in the gaol of the Chapter, have given orders for a fresh enquiry to be opened, at which the evidence will be heard of all those people in the diocese having cognisance of any facts relating thereto. We declare void the previous proceedings, interrogations, judgments, and we annul them in the name of the members of the Church in general and sovereign Chapter assembled, and we state that there is nought in the appeal to God treacherously made by the demon, in view of the con-

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spicuous intervention of the devil on that occasion. And the said judgment shall be proclaimed to the sound of the trumpet far and wide throughout the diocese wheresoever have been published the misleading edicts of the preceding month; all of which were notoriously due to the instigations of the demon, as doth appear from the confessions of the late Hiérosme Cornille.

May all Christian folk lend aid to our Holy Church and keep the commandments.

JEHAN DE LA HAYE

#### IV. HOW THE MOORISH GIRL OF THE RUE CHAULDE DID FRISK IT SO NIMBLY THAT ONLY WITH MIGHTY TOIL WAS SHE CAUGHT AND COOKED ALIVE THUS CHEATING HELL OF ITS PREY

*Written in the month of May, 1360, by way of will and testament.*

Y VERY dear and well-beloved son, when thou shalt be of an age to read this, I, thy father, will be lying in the tomb, imploring thy prayers and beseeching thee to order thy life in such wise as it shall be commanded thee in this rescript bequeathed to thee for the good governance of thy family and for thine own safety and well-being. For these things I did write down while yet my senses and understanding were, as 'twere but yesterday, struck and impressed by the sovereign injustice of mankind. When I was a young and vigorous man, I conceived the high ambition of finding advancement in the Church and attaining to the highest dignities therein; for no mode of life seemed to me to offer a nobler calling. Therefore, nourishing this weighty project in my bosom, I learned to read and write and, in due course, after much study, fitted myself for Holy Orders. But, forasmuch as I had none to favour my



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career, nor any to give me counsel on my way, I conceived the plan of becoming scrivener, illuminator and rubricant to the Chapter of Saint Martin whereto belonged the richest and most exalted personages in Christendom; for the King of France himself is but a simple canon there. There then, thought I, I should find more easily than elsewhere, services I might render to noble lords, discover masters, gain me patrons, and by their influence enter far into the religious fold and find me, at length, with a mitre on my head and seated in an archiepiscopal throne, I recked not where. But this first idea of mine was overbold and not a little too ambitious, as God, in the event, was pleased to show me. Indeed, Messire Jehan de Villedomer, who hath since been made Cardinal, was chosen in my place, and I rejected and discomfited. Then, in my evil plight, I received some easement of my grief through the counsel of good old Hiérosme Cornille, Penitentiary of the Cathedral, of whom I have oft times spoken to thee. This beloved man constrained me by his gentleness to come and take the pen in the service of the Chapter of Saint Maurice and the Archbishopric of Tours; the which I did with honour, seeing that I was accounted a mighty skilful penman. In the year which was to see my entry into the priesthood, there took place and made great stir the famous trial of the devil of the rue Chaulde whereof the old folk still talk, and the tale of which they still recount of an evening to the young—a story which, in days gone by, was told by every fireside in France. Now, deeming that 'twould be for the advancement of

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my ambition and that, for such assistance, the Chapter would give me some position of dignity, my good master procured for me the office of recording all those things which, in this weighty affair, should be set down in writing. From the very outset, Monseigneur Hiérosme Cornille, a man nearing his eightieth year, and of sage counsel, upright soul and sound understanding, suspected some underhand dealing in this matter. Albeit he had no love for wantons or strumpets and had never towlsed a woman in his life, which was holy and venerable, wherefore he had been chosen as judge, nathless he, as soon as the evidence had been given and the poor child been heard, did think it clear that, although this merry hoyden had broken the bounds of her convent, she herself was innocent of any pact with the devil, and that her valuable property was coveted by her enemies and others whom, for reasons of prudence, I will not name. Everyone, at the time, did think her so richly furnished with silver and gold, that certain among them used to say she could buy up the whole province of Touraine were she so inclined. Thus countless lies and calumnies, concerning the girl, whom the "good women" regarded with envy, were bandied about the country and were believed as if they were Gospel truth. In these circumstances, Monsieur Hiérosme Cornille, realising full well that there was no demon in the woman save the demon of love, made her promise to remain in a convent for the rest of her days. Then, having been assured by certain doughty knights, brave in the field and rich in estate, that they would do all in

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their power to save her, he encouraged her secretly to demand of her accusers that she should receive the judgment of God, albeit he arranged with her that she should hand over her property to the Chapter, so that evil tongues should have nought to say. By this means it was hoped to save from the stake the most delicious flower that had ever fallen from Paradise upon this earth of ours; the which flower of a woman erred but in one respect, to wit, an excessive tenderness and compassion for lovesickness, conveyed by her eyes to all her suitors. But the real devil, in the guise of a woman, intervened in this affair. I will tell thee how. A great enemy of the virtue, nobility and holiness of Monseigneur Hiérosme Cornille, by name Jehan de la Haye, having got to know that the poor wench, in her gaol, was treated like a queen, did maliciously accuse the Grand Penitentiary of connivance with her, and of being her servant, because, averred this evil priest, she made him young, amorous and happy—a charge which caused the old man to die of grief in a single day, for he knew by this that Jehan de la Haye had sworn to undo him, and coveted his dignities. And in fact, our Lord Archbishop visited the gaol and found the Moorish girl in very comfortable quarters, very snugly tucked up in bed and no shackles on her limbs, because having thrust a diamond into a place where no one would have thought she could retain it, she had purchased the indulgence of the gaoler. At the time, there were some who would have it that the gaoler was in love with her, and that for that reason, or because he was in great

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terror of the young barons who were her lovers, he engineered her escape. The worthy Cornille, being about to pass over to the majority and, by reason of the uproar caused by Jehan de la Haye, the Chapter deeming it necessary to declare null and void the proceedings that had taken place under the presidency of the Penitentiary as well as the decisions arrived at, the said Jehan de la Haye, then a mere ordinary Vicar of the Cathedral, explained that for that purpose, all that was required was that the worthy man should make a public confession on his deathbed. And thereupon the dying man was tortured and tormented by the members of the Chapter, both of Saint Martin and Marmoustiers, by the Archbishop and likewise by the Pope's legate, it being their object to prevail on him to retract in favour of the Church, a thing whereto the worthy man was right loth to consent. But after endless pother, his public confession was ready to be delivered, and to the recital thereof came all the principal personages in the city; and so great was the horror and consternation caused thereby, that I have no words to describe it. Prayers were publicly recited in the churches of the diocese to atone for this terrible evil, and no one but was in mortal fear of seeing the devil himself come down the chimney. But the real truth of the matter is that my kind old Master Hiérosme was, at that time, stricken with the fever and saw bogies in his room when they wrung this retractation from him. When the fit had left him, the poor old saint wept bitterly on learning the scurvy trick that had been played upon him.



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And indeed he gave up the ghost in my arms, in the presence of his doctor, beside himself with grief at this trickery, saying that he was going to lay himself at God's feet to beseech Him not to allow such a piece of wickedness to be brought to pass. The poor Moorish wench had deeply touched him by her tears and repentance, sith, before instructing her to appeal to the judgment of God, he had very specially and privately confessed her and had thereby disengaged the divine soul from that body, whereof he spake to us as of a diamond worthy to adorn God's holy crown when she had quitted this life, her penances all performed. Then, my dear son, knowing by the things that were current in the town as well as by the poor wretch's artless replies, what was really afoot in this affair, I resolved, on the advice of Master François de Hougest, physician to the Chapter, to feign illness and quit the service of the Church of Saint Maurice and the Archbishopric, being unwilling to stain my hand in the innocent blood which still cries out to God, ay, and will continue to cry until the last trump shall sound. Then the gaoler was dismissed and the torturer's second son put in his place, the which cast the Moorish girl into a dungeon and most cruelly loaded her hands and feet with irons weighing fifty pounds, not to mention a wooden girdle. And the gaol was watched by the musketeers of the City and the diocesan guard. The girl was put to the torture, racked and her bones broken. Conquered by pain, she made a confession in the terms required by Jehan de la Haye and was soon afterwards condemned



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to be burnt in the open space of Sainct Estienne, after having been stationed in the church porch, arrayed in a shift of sulphur; and finally, all her property was confiscated by the Chapter, *et cetera*. This verdict was the cause of serious disturbances and conflicts up and down the city, because three young knights of Touraine swore to die in the poor girl's service and to set her free by hook or by crook. And they came into the city accompanied by thousands of suffering folk, labourers, old soldiers, fighting men, artisans and others that the girl had helped, saved from misfortune, from hunger, and from all manner of wretchedness. Next they searched all the slums and hovels of the city which housed those to whom she had given succour. Then, when they had all assembled and gathered together, at the foot of Mount Louis, under the protection of the men-at-arms of the aforesaid lords, they found themselves rubbing shoulders with all the rough lads for twenty leagues around, and one fine morning, they all went and laid siege to the archiepiscopal prison, demanding that the Moorish girl should be handed over to them, as if they were fain to put her to death, but in reality to set her free, place her on a charger, and so enable her to get away into the open country, for she was a most accomplished horsewoman. And looking upon this seething, driving mass of humanity, we did see between the walls of the Archbishop's palace and the bridges more than ten thousand swarming men, not counting those who were perched on the housetops and hanging out of windows on every floor to look on at the

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riotous scene. It was easy to hear, on the other side of the Loire, and beyond Saint-Symphorien, the terrific shouting of the Christians, who were thronging to the place with lawful intent, and of the others who were surrounding the gaol for the purpose of rescuing the ill-fated girl. So terrible was the crush among the folk composing this mob, who were clamouring for the wench's blood—though not one of them but would have fallen at her feet had they had the good fortune to see her—that seven children, eleven women, and eight men were crushed and mangled out of all recognition, for they looked like so much mud. In short, so wide did this human Leviathan open its jaws, that the roar of it was heard as far as Montils-les-Tours. One and all they kept shouting "Death to the Succubus!" "Stows over the demon!" "I want a quarter of her!" "I'll have some hair!" "I'll have a foot!" "Give me her mane!" "And me her head!" "And me the other thing!" "Is it red?" "Can we see it?" "Will it be cooked?" "Kill! Slay! . . ." Each one shouted a different shout. But the cry "Largesse to God, death to the Succubus!" was yelled so fiercely and unanimously by the crowd that ears and hearts bled at the sound of it, and all the other cries were faint in comparison. The Archbishop resolved, in order to calm the storm that threatened universal destruction, to come forth in great pomp from the church bearing the Blessed Sacrament; a proceeding which saved the Chapter inasmuch as the roughs and the lords, who were leading them, had sworn to destroy and burn the cloister and to put the canons to the

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sword. By this stratagem, each and every rioter was compelled to depart and, since there was nothing to feed on, to betake himself home. Then the monasteries of Touraine, and the lords and burgesses, in great perturbation lest there should be further rioting and pillage on the morrow, did meet together by night, and ordered their defences in accordance with the counsel of the Chapter. They arranged that men-at-arms, archers, knights, and burgesses, in infinite numbers, should keep watch, and they killed a party of herdsmen, mercenaries and ne'er-do-weels, who, learning of the riots and tumults there were afoot in Tours, flocked thither to swell the ranks of the malcontents. Messire Harduin de Maillé, an aged nobleman, harangued the young nobles who had an interest in the Moorish girl and talked the matter over sensibly with them, asking them if, for a chit of a woman, they would lay waste the whole of Touraine with fire and sword. And even if they were victorious, whether they would be able to keep a rein on the disorderly rabble whom they had summoned to assist them. He said that these robbers, having sacked the castles of their adversaries, would next proceed to attack their leaders; and further, that the rebellion having, at the first assault, proved abortive, for at present, at all events, the place was clear of rioters, how could they hope to get the better of the Church of Tours, which would call in the aid of the King? And he urged many other things besides. To these arguments the young knights said it would be quite easy for the Chapter to let the girl out by night, and that if they did







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this, the cause of the rebellion would be removed. To this wise and humane suggestion, Monseigneur de Censoris, the Papal Legate, replied that the interests of the Faith and the Church required that they should not be worsted in the encounter. And so, the unhappy girl would have to pay the penalty for everything; for it was agreed that no enquiries should be made regarding the cause of the sedition.

Thus the Chapter was enabled to deal with the girl just as they liked; and to witness the ecclesiastical act and ceremony of her execution, people came from twelve leagues round. And on the day when, the Church's part having been fulfilled, the demon was to be handed over to the secular arm, to be publicly burned at the stake, no man, were he serf or abbé, could have obtained a lodging in the City of Tours, not for a golden sovereign. The night before, a vast number bivouacked outside the city, sleeping in tents or lying on straw. Food supplies ran short, and many, who came thither with their bellies full, departed with them empty, having seen nothing but a gleam of the flames from afar off. And the robbers reaped a fine harvest along the highways. The poor courtesan looked nearly dead. Her hair had gone completely white. She was, in truth, no more than a skeleton with a meagre covering of flesh, and her irons weighed more than she did. If she had had great joy in her lifetime, she was paying dearly for it now. People who saw her pass, said that she wept and cried in a manner to draw tears, even from the most implacable of her persecutors. So, in the Church, it was found

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necessary to put a gag in her mouth, which she gnawed as a lizard gnaws a stick. And the executioner bound her to a stake to keep her up, for she kept slipping and almost falling to the ground for want of strength. Then, on a sudden, she regained her strength for, according to the report, she managed to get clear of her bands and escape down the church in which, summoning to her aid the tricks of her first calling, she contrived with marvellous agility to climb up on to the upper gallery, and flitted like a bird along the columns and carved stone-work.

And she managed to get out on the roof when a man-at-arms aimed at her with his cross-bow and planted an arrow in the heel of her foot. Notwithstanding that her foot was nearly cut off, the poor girl continued to run about on the church roof, regardless of her injury, treading on her broken bone, her blood ebbing from her, so great was her terror of the burning stake. At last she was captured and bound, flung into a tumbril and carted away to the stake, and from that time none heard her utter a cry.

The story of her wild flight about the church hardened the people in their belief that she was indeed the devil, and some there were who averred that she had flown through the air. Then while the executioner was thrusting her into the fire she gave two or three horrible leaps and fell in the midst of the flames which burnt all day and through the night. The next evening, I went to see if aught remained of this wench, so gentle and so loving, but I found nought save a small fragment of the

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pubic bone wherein, despite the mighty fire, a little moisture still lingered and there were some who said that it still thrilled and quivered like a woman. I could not, my dear son, recount to you all the numberless and unexampled testifications which, for ten years or thereabouts, weighed heavily upon me. Always was I mindful of that angel so harshly misused by wicked men; always, always, I beheld her eyes brimful of love. In short, the supernatural gifts of this artless child shone night and day before me, and I prayed for her in the church where she had suffered martyrdom. Nor had I the courage to look, without a shudder, on the Grand Penitentiary Jehan de la Haye, who died eaten up by the pox. Leprosy took just vengeance on the bailiff. Fire consumed Jehan's house and likewise his spouse, and all those who laid hands upon the stake departed with burning fire within them.

All this, my beloved son, gave rise to many thoughts, which I have here set down in writing, so that our family may ever be guided thereby.

I quitted the service of the Church and married me to your mother, who hath showered upon me untold kindnesses, and with her did I share my life, my property, my heart and soul, my all. Thus did she concur with me in the precepts which I here set forth; *videlicet*: First and foremost, if you would live happily, you must needs live far remote from folk connected with the Church, honouring them duly but suffering them not to come within your house; and the same by those who, lawfully or unlawfully, justly or unjustly, are considered

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to be our superiors. Secondly, order your life on a moderate scale and keep to it, never trying, in any way, to pass for rich. Take heed to excite the envy of no one; and see that you offend no man in any manner, for one must needs be strong as an oak that kills all the plants that grow beneath it, if one would crush the envious where'er they show their heads. And even so one would risk losing one's life, for human oaks are especially rare, and no Tournebousche ought to flatter himself that he is one, as long as he's a Tournebousche. Thirdly, a man should never spend more than a quarter of his income, never talk about his affairs, conceal his chattels, and never run into debt, go to Church like other folk, and always keep his thoughts to himself; for if you do that, they are your own and not for others to adopt, distort and twist about as they will to make calumnies thereof. Fourthly, never aspire to rise above the rank of a Tournebousche, the which Tournebousches are now, and always will be, drapers. Marry your daughters to well-to-do drapers; send your sons to be drapers in other towns of France, with these wise precepts in their hearts to help them; bring them up to hold the drapery business in honour and leave not a single grain of ambition in their minds. *E'en such a draper as Tournebousche* ought to be their glory, their armour, their name, their motto, their life. Now, by continuing thus, and always being content to remain drapers, the Tournebousches will never become notorious, but will live ever like harmless little insects, the which, when once they find a lodgment in a beam, bore their holes



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and go in absolute safety, as far as their roll of thread will let them. Fifthly, never speak any other language save the language drapers use; don't argue about religion, or about what the Government is doing, or what it ought to do. And even if the Government of the country, or the province, and God and religion should veer about, or take it into their head to swing from right to left, Tournebousche, if he is a wise man, will always stick to his cloth. Thus, by attracting nobody's attention in the town, the Tournebousches will live peacefully and undisturbed with their little Tournebouschekins, paying their rates and taxes regularly; and everything that they have to give, whether they like it or not, whether it be to God, the King, the town or the parish, with none of which it behoves a man to haggle. So then a man must needs preserve the patrimonial treasure if he would have peace or purchase peace, never get into debt, always have plenty of corn in the bin, and disport himself in comfort and safety with the doors and windows closed.

By following this line of conduct, the Tournebousches will never fall foul of anyone; neither Government, nor Church, nor nobles, though to these, if occasion should arise and you cannot avoid it, you will lend a few crown-pieces, though you need never hope to see them again—I mean the crowns. So it will come to pass that everyone, at all times, will love the Tournebousches—modest little people—Tournebousches with their little feet; Tournebousches who know nought about anything. Let the witless prate their bellyful. No Tournebousche



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will ever burn or swing for King or Church or anyone at all. And the wise Tournebousches will have plenty of money secretly tucked away, live very cosily in their homes, always warm and snug and safe.

Therefore, my dear son, take my advice, and order your life on the small scale. Let this be the watchword of your family. Let it guide your footsteps as though it were a heap of the province. And when you come to die, let your successor maintain it and hold it sacred as being the Tournebousche gospel until God wills that there shall be no more Tournebousches in the world.

The above letter was found at the time when the inventory was taken in the house of François Tournebousche, Lord of Veretz, Chancellor to His Highness the Dauphin, and condemned, at the time of the latter's rebellion against the King, to lose his head and to behold the confiscation of all his property by order of the Parliament of Paris. The said letter was handed over to the Governor of Touraine as an historical curiosity and was placed with the documents relating to the trial in the Archiepiscopal Palace at Tours by me, Pierre Gauthier.

The Author, having completed the copying and deciphering of these parchments, translating them from the foreign tongue into French, the donor thereof said that, according to some, the rue Chaulde at Tours was so called because the sun lingered there longer than in any other part. But notwithstanding this version, people

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of insight and intelligence will find in the warm passage of the Succubus the true origin of the name. And therein the Author doth acquiesce. This doth teach us to abuse not our bodies, but to make wise use thereof, if we would save our souls alive.



## EPILOGUE





Now whereas this Second Decade bears on its title-page a notice to the effect that it was finished in the chill and snowy season of the year, it hath, in fact, come to birth in the merry month of June when all the world is clad in green; for the poor Muse, to whom the Author is subject, hath more whims than a love-sick Queen, and for some mysterious reason did take it into her head to drop her fruit among the blossoms. No one can boast that he hath got the fay in hand. Sometimes when the mind is occupied with grave and solemn thoughts, behold the lass comes laughing and skipping, pours her dainty prattle into your ear, tickles your lips with the tip of her wing, dances her mazy rounds, and plays the very devil in the house. And then if the scribe sends Science to the dogs and makes ready to gambol, saying, "Wait but a moment, sweeting, I am coming!" and so gets up in a tearing hurry to frolic with the jade, behold she's gone! There's no more girl. She's gone back to her hole; and there she lies rolled up like a ball and squealing. Take a poker, a churchwarden's stave, a yokel's stick, a lady's stick; up with them and hit her and curse her roundly the while she squeals. Strip every rag from her back. She'll squeal. Stroke her and pet her, she squeals. Kiss her and say, "How now, chuck!" Still,

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she squeals. Now she's cold; now she's going to die; good-bye love! goodbye joy! No more naughty tales! Mourn her passing duly; weep for her; say she's quite dead; sob and make moan—Hey presto! She's up again, rippling, bubbling with laughter. She spreads her white wings, flies hither, flies thither, wheels round and round and in and out in the air, gambols and frolics, shows you her devil's tail, her woman's breasts, her lusty thighs, her angel face, shakes her fragrant tresses, turns over and over on a sunbeam, shines with perfect loveliness, changes in hue as the colours change on a pigeon's neck, laughs till she cries, lets her tears fall into the sea where the fishermen find them transmuted into beauteous pearls which go to adorn the royal brows of queens; in a word, she turns, twists, curvets, pirouettes and prances like a filly broken loose, showing her virgin crupper and such dainty sights besides, that a Pope would lose his immortal soul for a sight of them.

And while the untamed creature is thus having her fling, maybe we encounter some ignorant fellows, some pompous nincompoops from the town, who accost the poor poet, saying, "Where is your mount? Where are your ten precious tales? A plague on you for a scurvy promise breaker. Ay, we know your ways. You go a-wenching and do nought between your meals. Where are the goods?"

Now, albeit I am by nature a man of gentle disposition, I should like to see one of these gentry with a pole rammed through his fundament, as they do in Turkey, and in that posture sent forth a conny-catching.

Here endeth the Second Decade. May the devil thrust it forth with his horns, and it will get a good reception from all merry Christian folk.



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